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**Week 14: Rescue LIFE**

**Sheila Walsh**

**Chris Brown**

**SHEILA:** Welcome to *LIFE Today*. I am Sheila Walsh and I have the privilege of being here by myself today. Randy is off enjoying a little R and R and James and Betty, I hope are doing the same. But I'm very excited about today's show. The author of this book, *Restored*: Transforming the sting of your past into purpose for today. Very honest. Very vulnerable. Chris Brown, I'm so glad that you're here.

**CHRIS:** Yeah, total honor. Thank you, Sheila.

**SHEILA:** So let me ask you, once it is actually in print and you put it all out there, how does that feel sometimes? Because isn't this like your first own book?

**CHRIS:** Yes, I feel extremely vulnerable and exposed, to say the least. Even just looking at it right there on the table is just knowing that you've peeled back the layers and you've kind of exposed people to your most inner wrestles. Things like insecurity and things like imposter syndrome. Some of those things that we don't talk about but they're very real.

**SHEILA:** But the title says it all, *Restored*. You start with the story of being in a board meeting or a conference room and you're there with your boss, and they're watching a video of you. The critique is that you're this perfect, All American successful -- but inside, that's not how you were feeling at all.

**CHRIS:** No, those kinds of moments surprise me because I don't see myself as that. I see myself as the little boy on the wrong side of the tracks coming from a bad lineage, coming from an impoverished childhood: violence and drugs and narcotics and death and

tragedy. I have these pinch-me moments about every minute when I'm in a board room like that, a really impressive board room at a very impressive job or ministry and we're talking about some pretty high-level sharp things. And I'm in the room and those sharp people are telling me that I am super sharp and polished. I don't know what you're talking about. I'm this little kid who is scared and confused in the corner of my apartment, apartment 217, with no food and no furniture and roaches crawling across the carpet. That's what I see, and that's what I feel.

**SHEILA:** Why do you think within the Christian community, and particularly, as you start moving up the ladder in Christian leadership, why do you think we feel obliged to put forward this image?

**CHRIS:** As, I guess, not only just in America, but mostly the western world, I don't know much about the eastern world, but ministry is getting more and more cameras, more and more lights. We've got more technology and so everything is just getting bigger. You've got social media and you've got all the online audience. So there is a pressure, no one says it, but it's in the air that you've got to be something that you're not.

Even just social media, what it is, it is a highlight reel of your best moments. No one said on paper that it needs to be that way. It is just human nature; we want to show our best side. So you do that, millions and millions of people do that over time, it gets really blown up; and the next thing you know we have sucked vulnerability and authenticity out of the culture. No one said, hey, let's suck vulnerability out of the culture. It just happened.

So for me, I just want to kick back against that and say, hey, I want everyone to know the worst sides of me. Not because it is about me but what I'm hoping what it will do is it will equip others to do the same. It will empower them to do the same. And hopefully, in the process, it will inject hope into their situation.

**SHEILA:** There are so many moments that you share from your childhood that are

literally gut-wrenching. What do you think are some of the most significant ones for you?

**CHRIS:** Well, there was a season in my life where I was on the wrong side of, I say Huntington Beach, California, and everyone thinks wow! Just a beautiful beach. I was on the wrong side of Huntington Beach at the corner of Edwards and Warner back then. I haven't been back in a while, so I don't know what it is now, but Ocean Villa Apartments; and I referenced apartment 217.

But there was a little season there where my mom was getting evicted every other month and we were living a lot of times three weeks at a time underneath the bridge right there at the corner of Edwards and Warner, sleeping underneath the Huntington Beach pier, the Venice pier. Just lots of tragedy in my life.

During that season, I was in an area where I was the only person that looked like me, so I was a target. And I would get beat up quite a bit. I was a really small kid, had not had a growth spurt yet. So I would get kind of beat up and bullied a lot. I had this one friend who was always there for me, would walk with me, he would process with me. Every time there was a scenario, he was always there for me.

I remember the power of a friend being there and showing up. I've taken that, that sting of all of that pain that he was there with me, and I've kind of bottled that up and I said, man, I would love to be a friend like that one day. And so if we really are transforming the sting of our past and transforming that into purpose for today, for me it is like, how good of a friend can I be? Because right now, rampant in our culture is that we would be stadium friends but we're not courtroom friends.

We just need to be the kind of friends -- I've got several megachurch pastors that many of our audience would know that behind the scenes, I'm restoring them secretly. Because in reality, we have a lot of grace for a lot of humans in this world, but we don't have grace for leaders. They're humans. So when they fall, it is amazing how many stadium friends turn their back on them. So for me, because of my past, I'm going to be a courtroom

friend, not just a stadium friend.

**SHEILA:** Yeah, when you talk about that in the book that really touched me because you talk about the fact that so many people think, well, if I identify with you while you're fallen, that's going to impact my reputation. Like our reputation is supposed to be something that is even a consideration. I love the fact that you've not honestly been to -- but you mentioned someone that you just--. What I want to ask you is when you show up, because you had to fly, when you show up and say, "I'm here," what did that do for that person?

**CHRIS:** Yeah. So the quick version of the story, not to ruin it for everybody, is I flew out to -- this particular pastor was in a rehab center. And in my opinion, he didn't even need to be in the rehab center. He was just going to the rehab center for perception. And he's like, you know what? I'm going to humble myself and I'm going to go anyway. The entire time he was there, and I forget the time span he was there. I kind of did the research when I wrote the book, but I can't remember, it was a long time, nobody visited him. Not one person called, not one person visited. So I was on the phone with him, and I asked him one time, I said, "Hey! So who has come out and visited you?"

And he said, "No one." I couldn't even believe it.

So I hung up that phone and man, I booked a ticket. So I flew from Nashville to somewhere in Arizona, I forget, I think I flew into Phoenix and the place was an hour and a half or two hours away or something like that. And so I landed, drove there and there was an hour window for visitation, and I was 20 minutes late.

So I sat down, we had a 40-minute discussion where I really didn't talk. I think in that scenario, in my mind, you don't need to be told anything. You're at a rehab center, you're getting told a lot. You're processing, you've got so much shame, he just needed someone to show up, to be that courtroom friend and show up and be there. I was there, I listened, I hugged his neck, I looked him in the eye, told him I believed in him -- emotional -- got

back in the car, and flew back to Nashville. And to this day, that was years ago, to this day, he probably texts me once a week telling me how much that meant to him. We cannot overestimate the power of just being someone who shows up in the lowest moments of our lives.

**SHEILA:** You've stewarded your suffering well. There is something about understanding what happens to us when we suffer. It is like it washes our eyes and you see people differently.

You talk about when you're sleeping under a bridge with your family, and you vow that will never happen. You will never be. But then you turn around in the life of somebody else because it's changed you as a person. You're like saying, okay now, this person is in trouble. They can move in with us.

What was that process like in your life? You didn't just move on and say, okay, I'm good now so let's just forget all that, and let's just move forward, and I'll live a comfy life.

**CHRIS:** Well, at the heartbeat of the way I'm wired, is I'm really thinking through what's called stewardship. It is a word that's actually used a lot with finance. But the whole idea of stewardship is you're managing something for the Lord. And for me, it is not just finance. Managing -- you're managing this life but we're also managing his story. It's his story, not my story. That book is not my story. It is experiences, the things that he allowed me to go through, it was his all along. My every breath, he is the one who breathed it into my lungs. So I'm actually living out his story and I'm managing it for him.

So for me, it's a sting that has happened in my past, I've got to make sure I leverage that for the kingdom. I give it purpose. Because just to have the trial, or just to have the test or just to have the issue pop up and then just let it go, there's nutrients that need to be sucked out of that situation. Because what that will give you later, an example that you're alluding to is whenever you're dealing with a conversation with somebody, there is sympathy. I think we know what sympathy is. There is another level, and it is empathy.

You can't feel empathy. Empathy, in a sense, is you feel what they feel. You're feeling it with them. You're taking the burden with them. You can't feel it unless you've been there.

So you have to go back and relive that pain, bring it out, take the band-aid off, take the scab off and you've got to relive it. I know what that feels like. Even teaching on the weekends at our church, I look out and I know somebody who just lost somebody. My wife and I lost three parents, three out of four parents before they were 50. We had just started adult life and so we know what that unexpected pain feels like to lose somebody way before they were supposed to be lost. So to be able to empathize with somebody. But that's past pain that we're transforming into purpose for today.

**SHEILA:** There is a story you tell in the book about one awful night when I think it is a boyfriend, perhaps, of your mom's, who is drunk and who drives literally into the house and threatens your little brother. Joel, is that Joel? Tell us about that.

**CHRIS:** Yeah, so one night, just hanging out at the house, actually, we weren't even believers at the time. No one in my family was believers but our grandma was in town, and we were kind of acting like we were churchgoers. And so we were just sitting around waiting to go to church and waiting for my stepdad to come home.

He did. He came home completely intoxicated on something. I have no idea what, still today. But instead of parking in the driveway, or even the front yard would have been a good place to stop, he drove through the living room. I don't know if it's on purpose or because of the intoxication. I don't know what it was, but he got out with malice in his heart; and got up and my newborn baby brother, grabbed him, and held a kitchen knife to his neck and paced around the house frantically, and just hyperventilating. Where it is like, I know him as a person, I don't think he would do it, but in his state, we are just freaking out and just scared to even move.

To shorten up the story a little bit he kind of freaked himself out and ended up calling on himself, called the police and the police showed up. In that, we didn't know what to do.

There was a stand-off. Don't come in! He's just scared at this point. He's just so intoxicated he's scared.

At one point, I snuck around the back of the house and told the police officers where he was, and they thought through a plan of attack or whatever. They knocked on the front door. And he came to the front door, so they knew where he was. So they had some bearings on where he was in the house.

I walked -- the other police officer, I'm like, eight, the other police officer backed to the end of the house, and they came up behind him and took his hair back. Two guys kind of took him from behind and took him to the ground and caught the baby, Joel.

So that was just one scenario that is in the book that you know, there are some things that shape your mind. And I had a little dog at the time.

**SHEILA:** Now that, honestly, that killed me because when you have so little that's truly loving on you and you have Ginger your dog, and you had to lose her.

**CHRIS:** Yeah, yeah. It sounds, those listening in or watching, and they're not dog people and they don't get it, maybe you can relate with the fact that it is like the only thing I had, and I had just got this dog. The only positive thing in my life. It was the only thing that was stable, everything else was just crazy around me. So it represented a lot more than just a dog, although it was really cute.

[Laughter]

But I had to give the dog away to the police officer. I don't know if the police officer ended up keeping it or not. They all told me the story of, "I'm going to take good care of it." So I would feel good. And then we knew that he would be getting out of jail very soon, so we actually fled the state.

From then on out, I'm now sitting in an apartment complex. We went to California at the time, we were in Colorado when it happened. And I'm just sitting in this empty apartment with no food, no furniture, and just no companion, nothing. That was just the way life was for the next few years.

But transforming that pain into purpose for today, a few years ago, we had a family who was in a really, really bad spot. We said, "Hey! You can come live with us for a little while." Just thinking innocently, no big deal. It will be for a couple of days. Well, it ended up being more than a couple of days. But the real issue was that their kids, they loved them some pets! And they had every kind of unique pet I don't even know if you need to have a license to have. I'm now talking some really weird pets. I had this moment of like, oh no! This ain't going to happen. My flesh was like no! We're not going to have 13 animals that are all, I don't even know what they are, I've never seen them before. They've got to be out of like Costa Rica jungles. I thought they were dangerous, I don't know.

So I've got this upstairs in my house; I've got like this jungle. I kept thinking to myself, no, this kid is in the same spot I was in. No stability in his life, everything is upside down. This is all he has and he's passionate about it. It was him and his sister. I don't know whose was whose because we kind of mixed them up on who owns what. But I was like no. This is the stable thing in their lives. So I'm going to dedicate a room for animals and I'm going to have all of these crazy animals in my life for however long they need to stay here.

But just to give everyone an example. That's what we all can do. We can take that pain from our past, and say, I remember what that feels like. And how can we add to people's lives today? Because Proverbs 11:25 says, "Those who refresh others, themselves are refreshed." I think many of us want refreshment, don't we? We just do. And the best way to refresh is not to be like, oh poor me! Oh poor me! No! It is to look outward and say, how can I add purpose? How can I add value to others?



And so for me, I just try to take the pain, harness it, and use it. I've got enough pain in my past, we all do, there is enough to leverage that so we can turn it around and minister to people.

**SHEILA:** You used an interesting phrase though. You talk about "dancing with pain." What do you mean by that?

**CHRIS:** Well, there are schools of thought out there. One of them is we need to run from our pain. Like no! Live for today. Ignore the past.

There's another rule of thought like no, you need to go and dive in. We've got to do this life planning and do 17 different counseling sessions a day. We've got to dive in. And what did that mean? And just really probably over dwell on it.

I don't think it is run toward your pain, I don't think it is run away from your pain, I think it is to know it is there and dance with it. And what I mean by that is you lead the dance. Like it is not like you're not dancing with pain and the pain is leading you. No, you're the one leading the dance. You're like, you know, we're going to go over here. You're aware of it. It's here. You can't say we don't have pain in our hearts, we've got it. It's there. Do we ignore it? No, that's not going to happen. It's there. We've got to show it who is boss. And we're going to come over here and we're going to use it over here. And we're going to take it over here and we're going to use it. We're going to leverage it. We're going to suck those nutrients out of whatever it was in our past and we're going to dance with it and make it beautiful.

**SHEILA:** So when you release this little baby into the world what's your prayer request, Chris, for people once they have finished reading *Restored*. I'm going to tell you in a minute how you can get your own copy.

**CHRIS:** Well, for me I wrote it from a standpoint of I do not at all want to be the hero in the story. My goal is that everyone would see their pain in the story. The stories are

compelling, they're captivating but I'd want people to see themselves in the story. They may not have the exact same story, but we all have our pain story. So I want them to connect with a story of pain or an occurrence.

But also, I want them to be inspired by it. But for me, anything I do, whether I write or speak I want to be inspired, but I also want practical advice and some practical instruction, okay, what does this mean for me? So what I've tried to do, is how can I equip people, how can I encourage people, how can I empower people that they can do the same thing all while putting it under an umbrella of injecting hope into their life?

My goal is that when you read that book, when you're done you have more hope in your life than you did when you started.

**SHEILA:** That will work! Let me tell you how practically that is going to look right now. Have you ever felt like you're just stuck, that you're imprisoned in a situation, and you can't do anything about it?

Well, there are some young girls at the moment who are in exactly that situation. And the good news is, you and I can do something about it. Would you watch this?

### **On the mission field**

**ANNOUNCER:** For the wicked men and women working as modern-day slave traders, neighborhoods like this are the perfect hunting grounds. Using deceit and threats of violence they prey on the innocent, the poor, and the most vulnerable. Human traffickers rob the hopes and dreams of their victims just to make a small profit.

### **Open Captions**

>> My name is Pinky Das. I come from a poor family. But I had dreams of getting an education. But that didn't happen. A year ago, when my baby was six months old, there was a lady who claimed she could give me work. But I was tricked and sold to a brothel.

When I tried to leave, they said, "We bought you for this amount." When I couldn't pay them, they refused to release me.

**ANNOUNCER:** The emotional and physical abuse these women face every day prove to be an effective prison. Even though sometimes they aren't behind actual cell bars, the victims in a brothel are held captive nonetheless.

### **Open Captions**

>> I thought of running away, but I always got caught. And I was threatened that my son would be sold to somebody else. Now I'm scared that my son will be taken away from me.

**ANNOUNCER:** LIFE Outreach and its mission partners have since rescued Pinky Das and her son. Today, she has started her journey to fulfill all her dreams. Together, we will reach, rescue, and restore hundreds of other women around the world just like Pinky Das.

### **Open Captions**

>> I still have hope that my dream will come true. I'm going to learn things, and I'm going to work for myself. And I want my son to have a better future.

### **End of video**

### **In the studio**

**SHEILA:** I've met so many young girls just like that beautiful young woman, and sometimes they're 12, 13 years old. They're told, hey, come and we're going to get you this great job in the village, and you'll be able to send money back to your family. And then they're usually given something to eat, a lovely meal, but it is drugged, and they wake up beside some man and their life is forever changed.

Here's the thing, they're just like you and me. They're just little girls who started with one dream, something that they felt, like Pinky Das, like she could do when she grew up, and

suddenly that it is all turned into a nightmare. I'll never forget my first trip to Southeast Asia and the desperation I felt when I got back to the little hotel where we were staying having seen what I saw and knowing that those girls were going to have to go back on the street that night. And I'd sat with them on the sidewalk, and they ate a box of Oreos. And now they're going to be put in these dresses and makeup. And I remember literally lying face down on the carpet in my hotel room and just sobbing.

I've never heard the audible voice of God, but I heard the Lord speak to me and say, "Sheila, get up and dry your face and do something." We have the most amazing partners on the ground right now. I haven't been able to go on one of these trips for the last two years because of COVID but our partners are on the ground right now.

We have some amazing friends of this ministry who have put up a matching gift of \$320,000. So whatever you give today they will match dollar for dollar. It normally takes on average about \$128 to start that process of either reaching, rescuing, or restoring a girl. But now if you're able to give \$128 they will match that and that will literally be two girls grabbed from the gates of hell and brought into freedom so that they know they have a name, they have a future. They're not victims that have no help. God hears every one of their prayers.

And as long as you and I are on the earth at this time, we are God's boots on the ground, and it is our joy to rescue. If you can give \$64, they will match that and that will go to reaching, rescuing, restoring one girl.

I really believe that trafficking is a work of the enemy. It is just hellish. Whenever we walk those streets, I feel such a sense of evil. I have to pray in the spirit the whole time I'm there. But let's not just watch. Let's not just pray. Let's be an answer to their prayers and do something. Do something today. Just do what you can.

Would you go to your phone and just give the best gift you can? And then we will bring you the stories like Pinky Das, of someone, not only is she safe, but her son has a future

and a hope. Please call now. 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**

### **On the mission field**

**Sheila:** The situation here, you can probably tell by my circumstances, there was abject poverty. The people who are using and trafficking these little girls are very organized, they're very well-financed. They know what they're doing. I asked one of the girls, have you thought of just trying to escape? Their thing is, if I try and escape, they will come up to my parents because my parents are so poor. My parents are desperate. They have no money. So I'm forced into this life.

But you and I can do something. So what I'm asking you to do, would you let these little girls here who think nobody cares about them know there is a God in heaven who knows their name and who loves them. But he has a people who are committed to reaching out. So please, go to your phone, go online, make the very best gift possible and let's bring life to these trapped beautiful little girls.

#### **In the studio**

**SHEILA:** Thank you so much. If the lines are busy, persist. And remember, for any gift at all today, say I want a copy of Chris's book, *Restored*. Honestly, it is such a good book!

I want to thank you Chris for being vulnerable and for stewarding what you've been through so well.

**CHRIS:** Well, it is my honor. Thank you, Sheila.

**SHEILA:** And for all of us here at *Life Today*, we'll see you next time. God bless you.