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Week 16: Rescue LIFE: Last week

Sheila Walsh and Randy Robison

Jeremiah Johnston

SHEILA: Welcome to *LIFE Today*! I'm Sheila Walsh here with Randy Robison. Every now and again, you meet people and you think, yeah, this is a good guy, this is a great girl. You read their book and you enjoy it. And then one of the great joys is sometimes you meet someone and you think, oh gosh, we're going to be friends. That's how I felt when I met our guest today that we would be friends for a lifetime. So I want to welcome to *LIFE* Jeremiah Johnston! Hi, friend!

JEREMIAH: It's great to be here. Thank you, Sheila. Thank you, Randy. It is a blessing to be back.

RANDY: It is great to have you. And you know a very timely topic, I mean it is always timely, but when you're talking about *Unleashing Peace*, what a week to talk about that. Right? Talk to us a little bit about this idea of peace and the original words that it comes from.

JEREMIAH: This is the most important word when you think about the English Bible. Our English Bible has 760,000 words. But if you and I were to meet at a train stop, Randy, and we're never going to see each other again, and I had one word to describe the message of the Bible from Genesis to Revelation, it would be the word *shalom*. This is the most important word and should be in our Christian creation vernacular; 550 times this Hebrew word *shalom* shows up throughout the Bible.

What's amazing is it was always on the tip of Jesus's tongue. He was always talking about shalom. Jesus wants us to be happy. It's not a sin to talk about happiness. Jesus wants us to rejoice. So rejoicing, being happy, the fruit of the spirit, it all rises out of this foundation called

shalom. And yet, so many believers find it elusive today. We've got to get beyond -- and that's why I love your program. I love how you elevate Christian thinking on this broadcast. You're known for that. We've got to get beyond the bumper sticker theology and the quick hot takes on social media to actually guide people by the hand. Peace shows up 550 times in the Bible, it's God's will for me to live in shalom. How do I get there? So that's what we wanted to do with this new exciting book.

SHEILA: Why did you call it *Unleashing Peace*?

JEREMIAH: Because so many of us feel like we're drowning in anxiety. I'm especially thinking about, I've noticed even when I speak about this topic, Sheila, you're a seasoned communicator, I have to actually scale back my tone. So many people who are struggling with anxiety, feel like they're drowning. They need the peace of God unleashed on them.

There are things we can speculate about in the Bible, and I love to geek out and speculate about all kinds of Bible questions. We don't need to speculate about shalom. It is God's will for us to live in shalom. Jesus said these things in John 16:33 after he had said all these things, "In the world, you're going to have tribulation," it is a given -- you're going to feel that pressure, "but in me, you have shalom." And then he says, "Be of good cheer." Now the only person who says that in the Greek New Testament is Jesus. If I were to say, hey, Randy. Cheer up, man. It doesn't matter; I can't change your circumstances. Jesus is our shalom, so when he says, "Take courage, be full of shalom," he's the only one who can change our circumstances.

RANDY: That's interesting. Now you said a couple of different words. We think of shalom as peace. You said happiness. What are all the connotations of that word?

JEREMIAH: The Bible is indiscriminate in how it uses peace, happiness, joy, rejoicing -- they're all in there. But the foundation is shalom. I really want to make sure people understand I'm meaning it in the Hebraic sense. In Greek, it's about 94 times in the New Testament, we have eirene. You might have met someone named Irene; that's peace in the Greek. We're thinking of it more in the Hebraic context, shalom; 550 times, this word means to flourish.

Actually, it means, it's a verb form, it can be an adjective. It's translated 70 different ways in the N.I.V. Bible alone. It means to lack nothing, wholeness, completeness, restoration. The cognates are rest, (people feel like they need rest today,) peace, shalom. It's the last thing Jesus says to his disciples. Think about it, the farewell discourse begins John 13, it ends John 16:33, "Take heart! I've overcome the world. Shalom!"

What's the first word Jesus says? We're in the Easter season. The first word the resurrected Christ says when he appears to those disciples that first Sunday morning, probably April 5th AD 33, "Shalom!" And you talk about a shalom that finished Satan, finished sin, finished death, finishes anxiety, finishes depression -- that's Jesus, and that's shalom.

SHEILA: That gives me holy chills. Talking about depression, one of the ways that God is using you powerfully is talking about mental illness within the church, and the pandemic seems to have brought a fresh wave. What do you say to people who are struggling with anxiety or depression? How do they unleash the shalom of God in their lives?

JEREMIAH: First off, I say you're not alone. We are all coming out of either high-grade or low-grade P.T.S.D. coming from this pandemic. Sheila, you probably know me as a really social guy. I kind of forgot how to be social. I don't know about you all going through the pandemic. Like I stood next to a guy at the take-out line. I had to remember how to be me. So you're not alone is the first thing I would say.

Number two, we have to lift, and this is where you all's ministry shines. *Stigma* is this word we have to eliminate. It is actually a Greek word; it means tattoo in the Greek, stigmatos. People feel tattooed. They feel labeled, they feel like they stick out if they struggle with mental pain.

Think about C.S. Lewis and his book, *The Problem with Pain*. That great author, C.S. Lewis said, "It's so much easier to say my tooth is aching than my heart is broken." So we have to eliminate stigma. You all do that so well. I'm trying to do that as well as a Christian thinker because I want to be clear Jesus Christ made no distinction between physical and mental healing. He healed them all. He didn't make distinctions. And yet, in the Bible, we see that it takes a

minute to get there. We come to Christ in a moment, Randy, as you know and as you've taught, transformation is a process. We have to eliminate all-or-nothing thinking with mental wellness. We have to learn to live in shalom. God gives us enough grace for today.

Here's the cool thing. You get all the delicious details when you interview the author after you finish the book. I had to have a major surgical operation. By the way, don't write a book about God's peace if you want to have God's peace. I felt like all the anxiety of hell has hit me since I've written this. God wanted to take me to graduate school on the subject, as my good friend, Robert J. Morgan said to me.

We have to learn to live by faith in God's promises, not explanations. But the cool thing where God has continued to shape me is I want to help every person watching us today on *Life Today* International develop what I call a shalom plan. A peace plan for their life.

SHEILA: Fantastic! Unpack that for us.

JEREMIAH: So Sheila, hopefully, our audience members have an educational plan for their life. That's either official or self-taught. Hopefully, they have a financial plan, a budget they live by. Hopefully, they have a five or 10-year plan, if they're in business or have a vision. We make birthday plans. We're all uber drivers for our children. I get it.

We plan everything except we don't intentionally plan how to live in the peace of God, and God wants us to. And the Holy Spirit, John 16:13, he is our peace planner, we have financial planners, the Holy Spirit will guide us into truth. And these are really super practical steps that we can make.

I want to just remind our audience of something very briefly. Saint Paul saw the Lord we can say pretty sure, seven times. He heard Jesus's voice in oracular form; that means he literally heard Jesus say, "No, Paul. My grace is sufficient." Two Corinthians, chapter 12. And yet, Paul was still a professional worrier, Sheila. Sheila, if you had seen Jesus seven times, heard his voice, Randy, I would say, you know what Sheila, you better get it together. Paul was still a

professional worrier, and we often quote Philippians four, the greatest antianxiety passage in all the Bible. We don't realize Paul had been a believer 30 years before he wrote Philippians four. Seven years earlier, he is in Troas. God has opened this incredible ministry door. Second Corinthians, chapter 2, verse 13, Paul says, "I have no peace of mind."

I can remember being there, Sheila. That's why my heart goes out to the entire *Life Today* audience. I needed a plan for my life so I had to understand it is God's will for me to live in his peace. It is not a sin to struggle with anxiety or depression, but hope comes when we have a plan. One of the most important questions we can ask each other as brothers and sisters in Christ is, who's helping you manage the stress, the anxiety, and the uncertainties in your life?

I was meeting with a gentleman recently who had just sold his company for \$500 million and he said, "No one -- I'm steeped in depression." So you can have all the money, and yet if you don't have a plan. So how do we get there? We help people with a plan. Comes through, the peace of God is a discipline, Randy. This is what is so cool about it. I wish we could have a Nerf gun of peace pellets. You know? Like you get the peace of God, you get -- no! We have to own it for ourselves. It is a discipline and we can get there.

So many believers, because there is so much stigma, though, don't even know how to ask for help. And the most courageous thing someone could do who is watching us right now is pick up the phone and call *Life Today*. And say, will you just pray me through having the courage to ask for help?

RANDY: And we do have people available, that number on the screen is a number you can call if you don't have peace in your life and you want to talk to someone about it.

Jeremiah, you mentioned a couple of things that are the enemies of shalom. You mentioned stress, you mentioned worry. What would be some of the other ones we need to be aware of so when we see these things we know these things are running counter to what God wants in our lives.

JEREMIAH: Randy, that's such an important question! Because how do we get there? Here's the important point that I've learned from the laboratory of my life is I have to say no to certain things for the bigger yes of God's peace in my life.

So let me explain my peace plan. For me, that meant I had to stop watching the news. I needed a news fast. It was amazing! My world changed when I did a news fast. We have to stop doom-scrolling. One of the worst punishments, according to psychologists is for Christians to be isolated -- or for anyone to be isolated for that matter. You think about solitary confinement. We need to get social again. Where two or three are gathered. I'm feeding off you all's spiritual vitality this morning and the entire staff here. You can tell God is in this place from the minute you drive in to *Life Today*.

And so another thing that is so important, we're going to touch our phone, Randy, 2,000 times today. For some of our kids, it is even more. We're going to see 10,000 media messages today alone. So many of those are so full of lies. And you've taught on this.

And so the problem is a lie becomes truth when we believe it and we act on the lie, even though it is a total lie from hell. And so we need as believers to be able to say no, I'm not going to do that. And there are other great practical things we can invite the peace of God.

But what I want to encourage people to do, this gets really practical, Sheila, look at your calendar. This is not like a decision you make one time and you don't look at again. Lord, I'm going to give my calendar to you; one of the most sacred. And God, we're all saying yes too much. We need to say no to a few things.

SHEILA: I learned that no is a complete sentence.

JEREMIAH: Yes, exactly! Thank you. We need to say that louder. We're not people's savior either. This is something I've had to learn as someone, as you do, as you as well, we stand out, we minister to people. They want to hear in 30 seconds something that they need a counselor to help them with or a Christian therapist.

I do want to share this with you. For those that feel called to ministry who are watching today, there is a great field of Christian counseling and psychologists, Christian psychiatry. Go into that field. You can hardly get an appointment today with Christian counselors because they're all booked. So we need more.

SHEILA: I was thinking when I first read your book and I thought about you and Audrey. You have five children; you have triplets! How do you unleash peace in a house with triplets?

JEREMIAH: I'll let you know when we find out.

[Laughter]

My dad joke, Randy, is our triplets are five and a half and so I haven't slept in five and a half years.

RANDY: No doubt!

JEREMIAH: So yeah, it's amazing when you learn God's peace, when you keep learning it. I mean Philippians four he kept saying, Paul kept saying, "I had to learn it. I had to learn it. I had to learn it." Jesus said, "Learn from me."

There is one other point I'd like to make, Sheila. When Jesus comes to the city of Jerusalem in Luke 19 because this is Passion week, he looks on the city. They've just said, "Hosanna! We praise your name. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord." Do you remember the first thing Jesus does in verses 41 and 42? He begins to sob over Jerusalem. There is a play on words here, shalem, shaleem, peace, Jerusalem, city of peace. Jesus weeps over the city of peace. He is weeping for the religious leaders, "Oh, that you would have known the things that bring you peace, and yet they're hidden from your eyes."

The religious leaders missed peace because they missed Jesus. So I hope religious people

listening to us today will make sure they've not missed the peace of God because they've missed that first step which is Jesus.

Romans 5:1, by faith we're justified by God's grace: *Therefore, having been justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.*

RANDY: You talk about something that I think is very powerful. You call it "The presence principle." Explain that.

JEREMIAH: It's amazing. The presence principle is the most important thing we can all do. We need to be present when someone is suffering and hurting. And we need to have this superpower called vulnerability.

Paul gloried in his weaknesses. Of course, in today's celebrity Christianity, we don't glory in our weaknesses because there is so much stigma. Paul did. He was able to be vulnerable and practice the ministry of presence.

And this is the book of James at work. Literally, it is to visit widows and orphans. It is people at their greatest point of need. That is what it is. The force of the Greek is I have to visit someone in their greatest -- there wasn't a greater point of need than being a widow or a child or especially, a female in the first-century world. P.Oxy.4.744, if it's a boy, keep it; if it's a girl, throw it away. And so you were vulnerable if you were a little girl in the ancient world. And Jesus gives us through brother James this wonderful edict, as you've said, Matthew 5:19, "Blessed are the peacemakers."

And so one of the most important questions we can, and this is so convicting, you can tell, probably, the Holy Spirit is still working on me. When you write a book on God's peace and when you begin to develop your peace plan you have to ask yourself some difficult questions, Lord, am I an agent for peace in my family? Or am I an agent of conflict? Lord, am I living in a truce? You don't want me to live in a truce, you want me to live in shalom. You want me to flourish.

And by the way, we still have to fight our battles, Randy. Thank God for *Life Today* standing on the front lines for Jesus Christ. I think of Gideon in Judges six. He interrupts Jesus saying, "God, if you're with me, why is all this stuff happening in my life?"

And God says, "I will be with you, Gideon." Even though Gideon didn't feel strong, God said, "You're strong."

So remember my faith isn't what I feel, my faith is what I believe. We could do a whole show on that.

And then secondly, right then and there, Randy is where we hear for the first time the scripture of God, "My God is peace." Yahweh, shalom, Judges six, Gideon builds an altar to the Lord and calls it, "My God is peace." He still has to go fight the Midianites and it is messy. He doesn't do it perfectly. He goes by night, he's kind of like me hardheaded, "Are you sure, Lord?" And yet God works with that and that's where we meet Yahweh shalom. So we still have to fight our battles. We can do it with shalom.

SHEILA: For somebody who thinks, what is the first step I could take? What would you say?

JEREMIAH: The very first step you can take is to know that it is God's will for you to live in his peace. It is not God's will for you to live in conflict, it is not God's will for you to live in confusion. It is biblical and there is a plan. It doesn't happen overnight. Remember that song? "He's still working on me to make me what I have to be." I used to sing it in churches. I came to Christ in Euless, Texas.

SHEILA: You were a singer?

JEREMIAH: Yes, for a very short time when didn't know. He's still working on us. And secondly, I want to encourage people to develop a care team. I have a care team in my life and that -- and my wife is not my therapist, by the way, and she is amazing. We've prayed together

since she was 17. I'm not going to tell you her age. But we've prayed together for a long time. We've developed a care team. I have Christian psychologists, psychiatrists, biblical therapists; some of the finest Christians, Randy, that I've met. I'm talking about the choicest servants of God, have a regular appointment with a great Christian therapist who helps them think biblically about it's a burden, the burden on your shoulders, Randy, running this international, you know Satan would love to take this ministry down.

You guys are literally emblematic of the impact of the church in the world. We can make all these academic arguments for the faith. *Life Today* is on the front lines bringing people shalom. So we need to pray protection on this ministry as well.

RANDY: You mentioned something I wanted to go back to because I think it is important. You say this is an ongoing thing. It's a process; we're all on a journey and I want people to understand that. We don't just arrive and then it is in the past. Contrast though your life when you practice this peace and maybe times when you haven't.

JEREMIAH: So important. And this is where I'm being vulnerable and I feel so comfortable doing that on this set. The times when I try to live in my own strength, some things don't make sense. I want certainty, Sheila. Certainty doesn't exist, by the way. Faith does not equal certainty. Faith equals trusting God through the uncertainty. And I had to learn this. Faith does not equal certainty. I was raised in the fundamentalist upbringing where to even ask a question was considered a sin. It is not a sin to question your faith. Jesus asks more questions than he answers; in the gospels, he asks over 300 questions. It is okay to question but we don't want to stay there. We want to keep deepening our faith.

Randy, the Lord has blessed our ministry, Christian Thinkers Society, and I had to learn how to manage myself. I had to learn how to manage, when I ask you who helps you manage the stress, anxiety, and uncertainty, triplets, a growing ministry, content deadlines, you live there, Sheila, you both do. And then wanting to really minister to people as well. I don't need my grapes peeled in the back, or room temperature water. I want to be among the people of God. But then it is exhausting; I understand how exhausted Jesus was. I had to develop a care team. I want to give

people permission to have a Christian therapist, have a Christian psychologist. Medicine is a gift from God for those that need it. The Lord has blessed us with these tools. He doesn't expect us to be perfect. We're not going for perfection. We have to eliminate the all-or-nothing thinking. The peace of God -- transformation is a process.

So here's the word that I love to leave people with -- freedom. If you read *Unleashing Peace*, if you develop a peace plan for your life, you're going to start getting a glimmer of freedom that's going to start opening, and you're going to realize, whoa! Thank you, Lord! Thank you, Lord!

SHEILA: This is an absolute gift. And you're going to want to get a hold of this book for yourself and for your kids, and for your neighbors. We're going to tell you how you can do that, how we'll send that to you.

But first of all, Randy and I would like you to watch something. There are some people in the world right now who desperately need physical freedom so that they can learn about the shalom of God. So would you watch this?

On the mission field

ANNOUNCER: These are the faces of those who once were. Once were happy. Once were safe... loved... cared for. Now they are vanishing at the hands of predators... abducted... misled. To distant cities they are taken. In foreign lands they are held captive. Their childlike innocence is erased, freedom forgotten; their spirit and will broken under abuse -- under torture.

Open captions

>> If the girls won't sleep with our clients, we beat them with a bat or electrocute them until they obey.

ANNOUNCER: Not only do these girls vanish, all that they were disappears too. Nowhere is there a darker evil than that perpetrated so viciously on the victims of sex trafficking. It may be the greatest evidence of Satan at work on this earth and it isn't going away without a fight.

Our Rescue Life partners are in place and ready to reach those who are most vulnerable, rescue those who have already been taken and restore the precious lives of those who have survived the wickedness of human trafficking.

End of video

In the studio

SHEILA: When I was watching that piece, watching those little girls one by one disappearing, it reminded me of when I was a teenager in Scotland. In our neighborhood, a little girl went missing and every single one of us was out on the streets. We worked all through the night. We had flashlights because we were determined that we were going to find that little girl and we were going to bring her home. It was a story with a happy ending. She had just got lost and wasn't sure where she was, and eventually fell asleep. I'll never forget the look in her mother and father's eyes when we were able to say, here she is, and she is fine!

That should be the case for every little girl who goes missing. But in so many countries around the world, that is not true. These barbaric traffickers take them, and it is as if they never existed. But every single one of these children was made in the image of God. And you and I are on the earth at this point to be God's boots on the ground to reach these children, to rescue them, and to restore them. But we need your help. This is our last week of Rescue LIFE. If you haven't done anything, Randy and I are just asking you, will you please, please do something today?

RANDY: Absolutely. And we're so thankful because we have some people that have graciously given a \$320,000 matching gift. What that means for you is normally the average cost to reach, rescue, or restore one of these precious children is \$128. But your gift today of \$64 will help us do just that. This is one of the greatest evils -- possibly, the greatest on the face of the earth. But that's just an opportunity for us to show them our good and gracious God.

We are His hands, his feet, as Sheila says, "His boots on the ground." So I'm asking you to put your boots on the ground right now. Go to the phone or go online, make the best gift you can. If you can make the gift of \$128, we'll send you some great reminders of your faithfulness to this.

And you will help reach, rescue, or restore two children. If you have the means, a gift of \$1280 will do that for 20 children.

Whatever you can do, we just pray you will join us and join the others who have said we want to make a difference. We want to shine that light into the darkness. We want you to be a part of that. It is such an honor to be able to represent our Lord in this world. That's what we're called to do.

So please, go online, go to the phone, make the best gift you can and know that you will be sharing the love of Jesus and rescuing a child from this awful evil. Do it now.

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."

This is the last week. Please call, write, or make your gift online.

End of video

In the studio

SHEILA: Thank you. If the lines are busy, please keep calling. And for any gift at all, please request *Unleashing Peace* by our guest, Jeremiah Johnston.

This is our last week of Rescue LIFE. We need your help. Let's do this. Jeremiah, I just want to thank you for another killer book. It is so, so good.

JEREMIAH: Thank you. Shalom to you both.

RANDY: And to you, and to all of you. We appreciate you watching. We'll see you next time here on *Life Today*!