

6/28/22

Week 27: Of WFL

Randy Robison and Sheila Walsh

Lisa Bevere #1

SHEILA: Welcome to *LIFE Today*! I'm Sheila Walsh, here with Randy Robison, and one of our favorite people on the planet; certainly one of James and Betty's favorite people as well. And she's got a great new devotional book out called *Fiercely Loved*, Lisa Bevere. You are fiercely loved by all of us here.

LISA: Thank you. I feel that and I fiercely love all of you. You guys are amazing!

SHEILA: It is an interesting title. Why did you choose the word *fiercely*?

LISA: Because I think most people feel like they're fiercely judged. And so I thought, I'm going to flip that on its head and say *Fiercely Loved*. I feel like God is like, people think he is distant. And okay, I'm going to love you because I love Jesus and I have to love you, but I would actually just kill all of you guys.

But God has a fierce nature, and he has a fierce protective nature about himself towards his children. I just wanted to shock people. People were like, I know God loves me. God loves me -- but he has to. No! He has always loved you and he loved you with an everlasting love before you ever turned your head and looked his way. So I wanted to layer a little bit of passion with that.

SHEILA: You? Passion? Wow!

LISA: Okay. I felt like how I feel towards my children, super fiercely protective of my grandkids and my sons. And it's not like oh, I'm just interested. Or oh, I just tolerate them. I think that we just have no concept of how engaged God is with us on a constant continual basis.

RANDY: Before we get into some of the meat of the book, I have a question for you. The difficulty when, yes, you write, while we were yet sinners Christ died for us. That's the ferocity, that's how much, but we have to at the same time communicate that if you reject Christ, you don't get the benefits of that love.

LISA: Absolutely. Right!

RANDY: How do we balance both of those, especially when we're talking to people outside the church?

LISA: The thing is God loves the people that are in hell. He isn't like, oh, I stopped loving you. He gave his Son. Why? For God so loved the world. And I think a lot of times, people think that's too good to be true. It is too good to be true because we only understand human love but that sacrifice is what made a way for us. So it would just be foolish to reject that love.

I know for me, I had never heard the gospel. I was raised with a very works-oriented thing. I was like headed straight towards you-know-where. I always tell my husband that it's a destination, not a cuss word. So that's where I was headed. I remember that nobody had to tell me that I was sinning, and nobody had to tell me that I was living a life that was displeasing to God. I knew that inside. What I didn't know is that he loved me and that he had given his Son to die for me and he would have done that if I was the only one.

So when I heard the love of God for the very first time, it was my very first date with John, I was like, whatever this is, I want to do it right now. I want to surrender my life to the fierce love of God -- because I knew who I was. And I knew he was holy. And that

was one thing that was worked into my life is this otherness of God and this awareness of my own sin and shame. I just saw this big chasm. And when I found out that he had done everything to close that gap, I just threw open my heart and said, "Come on in!"

RANDY: You make the gospel sound like good news, Lisa! Is it not the best?

LISA: Yes! I do think that most people don't feel the love of God because they don't love themselves. I didn't -- I felt like I had to punish myself. Even after I became a Christian, it was interesting. You get saved by grace and he loves you, and then the first time you mess up you're like I need to get saved again. Maybe -- or maybe I didn't get saved. And I remember going through this cycle where if I did something wrong, I would carry it for days before I felt like I had the right to confess it; kind of doing penance for my sin. And God was like, are you your own Savior now? Like what just happened here?

SHEILA: Why do you think -- I totally agree with you, I just came back, in fact, we both did; we were both speaking at the same event, 9,000 women. Why do you think we struggle so much to understand that radical, fierce, unconditional love of God?

LISA: Well, first of all, I think it is more than one thing. I think it's how we're raised. I do think religion has done some disservice to the love of God. I do think that the narrative, even of parenting sometimes, the way we raise our kids, there is that disconnect. What I found is that I needed, me, Lisa, even though I was already saved, I needed to change the way I thought God was thinking about me.

We're at this event and I brought the book. It hadn't even come out yet. Women feel so fiercely judged or tolerated or shamed that just a title that says God is passionately in love with you, they couldn't believe that good news. And we serve this God of wonder. And sometimes, I feel like the church has become too sterile. Like we have become so insulated and isolated from a God of creation, from the stars, from the mountains, from the oceans, from one another that we don't have a revelation because we are not in that constant awe and wonder of who he is.

I look at Psalm 139, and David, again, I looked at every single version, but you cannot escape that David had this moment where he realized that God was constantly thinking about him.

SHEILA: But that's mind-blowing!

LISA: In a good way. It says: "How good and precious are your thoughts towards me, O God." Not towards Jesus, but of course, they are towards Jesus, but we're included in that -- towards me. Everything in creation shows this wonder of God that he facets things to say I love you.

And then he goes on and he talks about, "If I could number the grains of sand of the shore, it's greater than that." It was so funny, we were just at the beach, and we're all jammed into a house that probably should have four people in it and we had 15. We've got grandkids and two dogs, we shouldn't have had one dog. It is four boys and one fiancé, three daughters-in-law, and mayhem.

So every once in a while, we'd escape and go to the beach. And one of my granddaughters had this bucket and she kept trying to get the right moisture, sand content to make the tower, and also the weight and flip it. It kept falling. I watched her and I thought, I can't even number the grain of sand in that bucket that she is flipping over, let alone this beach that I can't see the end of the expanse. So if I believe that God has innumerable, constant, treasured thoughts towards me, and David says, "When I wake up..."

SHEILA: "...you're still with me, you're still with me."

LISA: I love that. So it is constant. He never leaves our side. I just realized if that's true, I'm looking at some things the wrong way, and we all need to change that.

And again, wild -- God has wild wonder attached to him. We don't understand who he is, we only glimpse it through a mirror darkly.

RANDY: Wow! Okay. Tough question for you: So when you start talking about that, I think there is a notion out there that comes back that says, why are you making the gospel all about you? Why are you just focused on yourself? I have to not think about that. I think it is a false humility that says, I'm not even going to acknowledge God's overwhelming thoughts for me as an individual because I'm too small. It is this weird thing. And I think it is a trap. Have you seen that?

LISA: Yes! And again, I think it is like a weird religious thing because I always track -- when I get weird, I always put it back through how I would interact with my kids -- and I'm an imperfect parent. So would I be okay if my kids were like, "Oh, don't look at me. I'm too small. I'm just a worm."

I would be like, "What in the world? Who told you these things?"

Jesus was like, "You being evil -- if you being evil give good things to your children, how much more" -- he didn't say less, he said more. Again, if I do not receive the love of God for me, that doesn't mean I love my behavior all the time, that doesn't mean I love my actions, my choices. If I don't say your love is capable of consuming everything that separates me from you -- because see, our God is love but he's also consuming fire. And so, he has this love that says it's as strong as death. So he's like I'm going to actually -- the love of God will go after the things, that idolatry in my life will go after the things that threaten to consume me so that I am being remade to be in his image. And so I think too many people forget that they are a child of God. They were a child of sin and shame, and now, they're a child of the Most High God.

Again, I think that this is that weird exchange where people don't understand. I love that we've been singing I am who you say I am, but most people don't know who he says they are. Or they know it here and they don't know it there. So we did a devotional, and we

realized some of this was so counter common thought that it's going to take some time to get it from their head to their heart. If I can get them to first realize that God is not thinking thoughts of judgment, shame, or punishment. Now, are there still consequences to my choices? Absolutely! But Jesus took my judgment.

SHEILA: If you had one thing you think is one of the most significant things you've learned in your walk with the Lord that has changed you, what would that be? That's an unfair question.

LISA: No, no. I can say what was a catalyst. So we got saved, John and I got saved in the '80s, which was an interesting time to become a Christian. It is always a wonderful time to be a Christian but some of the songs and teachings in the '80s were like wow!

SHEILA: It was a little whacky!

LISA: In that season, there were a lot of prayers that were like, God use me. God use me to do this. God use me, use me, use me. And so I was like that's how you pray. If it is modeled, you're like okay. So I'm pretty sure he let me pray like that for a long time.

And then one day I'm just having a moment, just in the presence of God and I hear, "Have you ever been used by a friend?"

I thought, yeah. I have.

And he said, "How did that make you feel?"

Well, betrayed.

He said, "Have you ever been used by a boyfriend?"

I was like I thought you guys didn't remember those things. Why is this coming up? Why

is this coming up? And I said, "Yes. I felt abandoned."

He said, "I don't use people." He said, "I use the circumstances in their life, but I heal them, I anoint them, I transform them." He said, "Satan uses people." He said, "Too many of my children want to be used by me but they don't want to know me. He said, "Who you are to me is far more important, Lisa, than anything you think you need to do for me." He said, "I want you to first and foremost be settled in the fact that you are mine. You are my daughter."

And I feel like there are so many ministers right now that need to hear that. They're so busy doing things for God. He's like can we just back up and you be with me? Can I just be your life source? This is not -- and again, we can look at the scriptures and say, "Lord, Lord, did I not prophesy in your name?" "I didn't know you." But the truth is everything that you and I ever do should be from a motivation of not just love for others but love for God, and his love for us. It needs to be a response.

And so I remember that radically began to shift how I looked at everything because I kind of felt like I loved you enough to give my Son for you but now I don't like you. Could you please straighten yourself up? And then once you straighten yourself up and you've done enough for me, I'm going to love you. It was like a weird thing. And so it was the beginning of a change for me.

SHEILA: That's huge, Lisa. Huge!

LISA: Again, he will use circumstances. And again, I know people will be like, he used Pharaoh. I'm just saying he's a relational Father. He's not just a ministry boss. He is a relational Father.

RANDY: Look, I confess, I get stuck in the trying to understand things, and understanding is good so I'm not knocking that. Trying to understand the Bible as theology or as a philosophy, or as an idea. Sometimes I can read it as a rule book. And

Lisa Harper says, "If you're reading it as a rule book and not a love letter, you're reading it wrong."

How important is it that we not abandon all those other things, but get maybe the first things first which is why don't you try to get to understand the person behind the book?

LISA: Absolutely. I have learned as an author and again, I'm not comparing myself to the Bible or anything like that, but as an author, how a person reads a book is almost more important than what they read. So I always write a dedication on the front end of the book and I always sign the dedication page because I tell them, that dedication needs to be the filter. If you're reading a page and it doesn't sound like this was my prayer for this book, then you're reading it wrong. I want you to hear that tone of voice.

My husband and I, I had to learn that if I send him a text message and it is all caps, I'm thinking emphasis, he hears me yelling. So like I feel like when you have that legalism you hear God yelling when he is saying, this is an emphasis. This is important. This will save your life. This will be wisdom. This will be guardrails that will keep you out of legalism or keep you out of lawlessness. He says things strong but that's because he loves us fiercely.

RANDY: I want to ask you, and this is a tough one, what would the dedication of the Bible be? What would that lens be?

LISA: "For God so loved the world that he gave." And "The Word was God, and the Word was with God." I think John is -- let's just move it to the front. [Laughing] Please, I don't want to get you guys in trouble, but literally, when I got saved, I couldn't read about the Old Testament before I had met the love of God. And once I was immersed in the love of God because I remember -- and I don't know, Sheila, this is hilarious, so I was such a heathen that my mom came -- it was the summer I got saved, it was a couple of weeks earlier. She came in, and she put a book on a bookshelf like that, and she said, "There is going to be this thing, it's called the rapture. Your brother and I are going to

disappear. Your father and you will not. When we're gone, you need to read this -- you need to read this book."

I'm like, "What?" [Laughing] So of course, I acted like, rolled my eyes, acted disgusted. As soon as I knew she was in bed I pulled down the book, and I'm like, God's going to blow up the world? What's going to happen?

So Revelation is probably not the starting point for people. It was very confusing to me. I remember looking even at the account of Sodom and Gomorrah and wondering, hey, there was this devastation! And when I prayed into it, I thought, I bet there were a lot of cities that had that kind of callousness toward human life, "Take my virgin daughter." Like going on. But they weren't next to a covenant person. And so even in the destruction, there was protection. So it's just, for me, when you see it through that filter everything looks different.

RANDY: We need to continue this conversation.

SHEILA: Yeah! Maybe you can stay and we could do another show? But obviously, you're going to want to get ahold of this book, *Fiercely Loved*, "God's wild thoughts about you." Not just about Lisa or Randy, "God's wild thoughts about you."

But first of all, we would like to ask you to take a look at some people who are *Fiercely Loved* by God but who are really struggling. Then we'll come back and tell you how you can get a hold of the book. Please watch this.

On the mission field

ANNOUNCER: It is a known fact that a person can survive without food for a long period of time -- if they have access to water. But without water, a person may not live more than a week. The irony for these mothers is they can provide water for their

families, but in so doing have suffered the loss of one or more of their children to waterborne disease. Why? Because they did not have access to a clean water source.

OPEN CAPTIONS

>> If I had more money, I could have paid for medicine to save my daughter's life. Even though we are poor, if we had clean water, I feel there would be hope for my other children.

ANNOUNCER: What a tragedy for mothers who must live each day thinking will this be the day that one of my other children becomes sick and dies? Unfortunately, that day comes far too often for mothers in villages like these throughout the world.

With your help, *LIFE Outreach International* and our partners have been able to drill over 7,000 wells. Our question now is can we together press forward and provide more water wells so mothers don't have to live in fear that this might be the day another child of theirs dies simply because they don't have access to clean water.

End of video

In the studio

SHEILA: Water for LIFE is one of my favorite mission emphasis here at *LIFE* because it is so basic. I cannot imagine people in the world today who don't have access to clean water. That's why Water for LIFE is hugely on the hearts of James and Betty, and of Randy and I, all of us here at *LIFE*. We've made this commitment that this year, in fact, Lisa, you've been with us, on one of our trips. How did that trip impact you?

LISA: We took a river, rode a boat up the river and we saw all of these women that came from the other villages, and they watched as we opened up a well and they cried out, like thanking God and they begged us because there were children that as soon as they stopped breastfeeding they would get sick and die because the water they drank was the water they bathed in, everything, used the bathroom in, everything. Water is absolutely

crucial, and this was the place in Cambodia where the water table was high but there was no information about clean water. I remember they thought we were angels just for coming and bringing water to them.

RANDY: I love that you got to see that. I wish everyone could see it the way that you did. But Sheila, you know this is simple, we can do it, and it changes the lives of thousands.

SHEILA: And we've made a commitment this year to see 350 new wells drilled in 20 nations, and you can help us do this.

RANDY: Yeah, I'm not going to suggest that you'll become an angel, but I'm going to ask you to be like an angel to those people that desperately need us. I say that with a smile because of the joy, the joy on their faces, the joy that I feel that Sheila feels, my parents have felt for so many years when we go in and we say, "Here, drink this. It will give you life. You won't die!"

You know, we always go at the same time, we tell people about Jesus. We show them, we tell them about Jesus Christ because we want eternal life, and it starts with that water of life and giving them Water for LIFE. Let me tell you how it breaks down real quick. The average well is \$4800 for one well. That's the average cost for the 20 nations, the 350 wells that we've targeted this year.

If you can give a well, I'd ask you to do it right now. Go online, go to the phone, \$4800. Maybe you can do two. If you have the means, let's do it! But for most of us, a gift of \$144 will provide water for 30 people for a lifetime, an average of 70 years. Maybe a \$48 gift is more your means. That will give water to ten people for life. What I'm saying is that if you and I together with our volunteers in the field, and with our mission partners, we can have a huge impact.

Go to the phone or go online right now, please, and give the best gift you can. I promise

you, we will take it to the people who need it the most. We will save their lives but we need you to do it, I ask you to do it right now.

Begin video clip

ANNOUNCER: Across the globe, hundreds of thousands of lives are lost each year to waterborne disease, and nearly half of those are children under the age of five. Through Mission: Water for LIFE, you can give mothers hope and children a future as we provide clean, life-giving water for thousands of children and their families before it is too late.

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 of any amount, we'll send you the *God's Daily Promise* devotional set. These four seasonal devotionals each contain a daily scripture, inspirational message, and room to journal your prayers and insights from God's Word.

With your gift of \$100 or more, please request the "Faith, Hope, and Love" coaster set. All four beautiful sandstone coasters come in an elegant natural wood holder and artistically display the words of First Corinthians 13:13.

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. 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 so much. If the lines are busy, please, please keep calling. We can do this. And for any gift at all, you can request *Fiercely Loved* by Lisa. It is just such a great, great book. We need to hear this over and over and over and over and over and over again. You're *Fiercely Loved*!

RANDY: And we do. And we need to talk about it one more show. I'd love to have you for another program.

LISA: Let's do it! Yes!

RANDY: That's great! Catch us on the broadcast! If you missed it, you can always go online: LifeToday.org. We'll see you again next time!