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Week 32: WFL

Sheila Walsh

"Grace, Pearls, and Living a Yes, Lord Life"

SHEILA: Welcome to *LIFE Today*! I'm Sheila Walsh. I was reflecting last night that it is about six years since my mom went home to be with Jesus. I still find myself every now and again thinking I could pick up the phone and call her. Or I'll be in a store and I'll see something that she loved. She loved red cardinals and I remember seeing a sweater and thinking, oh, mom would love that! And then remembering that she doesn't need earth-grown sweaters anymore. I just don't think you're ever quite ready to say goodbye to your mom.

But I was thinking about the legacy of having a godly mother. If you didn't have a godly mother then my heart aches for you. Perhaps you had a difficult situation with your mom, and if that's your story then I'm really sorry. But I wanted to share with you some of the gifts that my mom left me. They weren't a lot in terms of money, they were priceless.

You know what? I have three items that I brought home from Scotland. After my mom passed, my sister, Francis and I were going through all of my mom's stuff and cleaning things out and Francis said, "What do you want to take back to America?"

And so there were three things that I picked out. The first one I'm going to show you is my mom's Bible. She was given that Bible when she was 12 years old. And the thing I loved about my mom's Bible is what was written in the back in her handwriting. I want to make sure I get it right. She had written, "Grace is undeserved favor. It is love stooping."

There was just something about knowing that my mom as just a little girl was beginning to understand the reality of what grace looks like. She would have no idea how much she

needed to understand that in the years that came. My father had a massive brain aneurism and went from being a loving husband to being a frightening person in our home. But the thought that I had my mom's Bible, and at 12, she wrote down that "Grace is love stooping" is such a picture of who our Lord really is.

I've had the privilege of working quite a bit with Dr. David Jeremiah and they have a project called "The Nativity." We were talking about the fact there is so much about what happened on that first Christmas that's outrageous. Even the fact that they told, the announcement, the angels, give the announcement to the shepherds.

Shepherds were the most looked down on in that culture. They weren't allowed to be a witness in court. If they were walking through the streets in Nazareth or Jerusalem or Bethlehem rather than on the hillside, people would throw fruit at them and spit at them. They were the most despised. They were looked on as simple and unclean. A huge no-no for Jewish people. But God decided to send this outrageous announcement to the shepherds. Such a declaration coming to the lowest of the low; to the ones who feel I'm not worth it. I'm not worthy. That's who the announcement was made. The people who would never be on anybody's guest list for a party, were on God's guest list.

Do you ever feel that you don't quite measure up to everybody? Maybe even in church or your Bible study or women's group, you look around and you think I'm not even going to say a word because they know so much more than I do. No. You need to remember that Christ did not come to a palace to rule, he came as a tiny fragile baby to two young teenagers. And the announcement went out to the shepherds. It is quite amazing.

I think that's why I love my mom's Bible so much. Little notes that she's written. Little flowers that she's pressed in it through the years -- but this idea that grace is unmerited favor.

On one of our trips in Thailand, we were in Bangkok and we were working with some girls in an area where their homes, which are rough shacks in the best of times, there had

been a terrible storm and so many of them had lost roofs, they've lost the door. It was an alarming sight to me that people were living in there and little children. And right next door was this large Buddhist temple. My question to our translator that we were working with was, "Do you think they ever think of taking some of the wealth that they have and sharing it with those who are literally on their doorstep?" And the answer was very straightforward, "No, no. The poor do not deserve our help. If they will take the little they have and give it to us as the priests, then perhaps next time they will be reincarnated into a better life. It is called karma."

Grace is the antithesis of karma. We get what we don't deserve. Rather than us having to reach up to a God who felt unreachable, Christ came, God reached down to you and me: Love stooping.

If you've known me for more than ten minutes, you'll know because I've shared it before on this program but I've learned something fresh recently. You know I have a great affinity to bummer lambs. Those are the lambs that are born and are immediately rejected by their mother for numerous reasons. Sometimes the mother will give birth to three lambs and will only take care of two and one will be rejected. Or sometimes, it is just one lamb and the mother refuses to have anything to do with it. And then the shepherd intervenes and takes care of that lamb.

What I didn't realize until recently, a friend from Australia wrote to me and said, "You know the interesting thing about bummer lambs is before the shepherd takes them in, you think they have broken necks."

And so I wrote back to her and said, "Why?"

She said, "Because their heads are bowed so low. Their heads are just bowed as if their necks were broken. And the shepherd comes in and lifts them up and cares for them."

And then those little bummer lambs, when they're healthy enough to be with the rest of

the flock when the shepherd will come out in the morning and call for the sheep, the bummer lambs are the first to run to him because they know his voice.

I love that! That's what Jesus did for me. At my lowest, when it looked like my neck was broken, when my head was on my knees on the floor in a psychiatric hospital, Jesus came in and lifted me up and held me close. And I will never follow anybody else because I know his voice.

If you feel that you're a bit of a bummer lamb and you don't deserve grace, the whole point of grace is you can't deserve it. It is unmerited favor -- it is God's gift to you and me.

I remember reading Chuck Swindoll's book, he has this great book called *The Grace Awakening*, and he talks about that first Christmas morning, and the first time that the baby Jesus opened his eyes, grace was awoken. I think that's something that I want you to get deep inside; that you will never have to earn the favor of God. That he reaches down and he lifts us up.

One of the other things that I brought home, because for me this gift, it's the pearls that my mom wore on her wedding day. And I love them. As you can see, they're in a very old box. But that's how my dad gave them to my mom to wear on her wedding day. And I love them and treasure them. And to me, the gift of the pearls is this, it's the gift of tough times. Now, I admit, we don't always think tough times yay! What a gift! But I have to tell you when Christ is with you in the midst of tough times, it is a gift.

Do you know how a pearl is formed? It's when a grain of sand will somehow get into the soft flesh of an oyster and it will irritate the soft flesh. And so what the oyster does inside is it will coat that grain of sand with saliva, with calcium, and after, sometimes up to three years, a perfect pearl will be formed. But it's something that's been born out of the suffering.

I love the fact that I read a story, let me make sure I don't get the date wrong. If you ever want to look it up, on May the 2nd, 2012 in Decision Magazine the Billy Graham organization, Kendra Graham who is Will Graham -- Will Graham is Dr. Graham's grandson, and his wife Kendra told a story about making pearls. I found it really fascinating and it just strengthened everything that I believe.

They have a daughter, one of their girls is dyslexic, which has made life a little harder for her at school. But a few nights before Kendra shares this particular incident, they had been watching a movie on TV about sea life, about what goes on under the surface of the ocean. And there had been some description of how oysters are made. And so one day, Kendra was watching her daughter struggling with her homework. And she said it should have taken her ten minutes but it was taking her over an hour. It was so frustrating for her. And she threw her pencil at the wall. As a mom, you just ache for your children. You want them to be okay. So her mom called from the other room, "It's okay! I'll be there in a minute, and I'll help you."

This is what her daughter who was eight years old at the time said, "No, mom. It's okay. I'm making pearls in here."

That is such a shift for me in terms of understanding suffering that you might find yourself in a place right now where you're struggling. You're struggling financially, you're struggling in your marriage, whatever it is, your job, your career, your health, your physical health, you're just struggling. And you think, Lord, where are you? I just want to invite you to be open to the idea that just as a grain of sand irritates the flesh of an oyster and eventually this beautiful pearl is formed that maybe you could start to look at your life that way?

After I read that story some time ago, I remember, probably beginning half of 2020, when I was struggling with depression again, I found it hard to get out of bed in the morning and just not feeling good at all. I got up and I went outside on our balcony, and I was just sitting there quietly in the presence of the Lord. And I felt this gentle reminder from the

Holy Spirit, Sheila, do you remember? Do you remember what you read? Do you remember what that little eight-year-old girl taught you? And I'd been outside for a while so Barry my husband poked his head out and said, "Are you okay out there?" Because he knew I'd been kind of down over the past few days. And I looked at him and I smiled and I said, "Yep! I'm making pearls out here."

See we get to do that. Because of Jesus, we get to do that. I think that's why I love my mom's pearls so much because she went through so much suffering. But because of what she wrote in the back of her Bible as a twelve-year-old girl, she knew that in love and grace the Lord reaches down to us, and in every situation, we get to be making pearls.

I found this, Revelation 21, verse 21. This is when John has been given this Revelation of what's going to happen and he sees in this the holy city, Jerusalem descending. And here's what it says: There were 12 gates to the city and each gate is made up of one pearl. It must be an enormous pearl. But to me, it signifies the suffering that Christ was willing to go through. He made pearls every single step he took on this earth until the final on the cross when he paid the bill for you and he paid the bill for me. So if you find yourself in a tough situation, just say to yourself, I'm making pearls here.

The third thing of my mom's that I absolutely love, and it was kind of a funny thing because we were going through all of my mom's stuff, my sister and I. She said to me, "Sheila, you're supposed to have my mom's engagement ring." And we couldn't find it, and then realized my mom had given it to another resident of the home she was staying in. She had swapped it for a box of chocolates.

And the matron was like, "Oh, I'm so sorry, Sheila! We can get that back for you."

I was like, "No. If my mom enjoyed this darling woman's chocolates, then she can keep the ring." Because that didn't have as much value to me as this did. This little picture you see on your screen. My mom had that above her bed all my life. Even if we changed homes, that little small picture hung above her bed. Two words: Yes, Lord!

When I was a teenager and I thought I knew more than I ever knew, I would say to her, "You know, mom, I like that, but you don't know what you're saying yes to."

She would just look at me with these kind big brown eyes and she'd said say, "No, Sheila. But I know who I'm saying yes to."

I treasure that picture so much because it reminds me of the joy of living a yes, Lord life.

Our funeral traditions are very different in Scotland from the ones I've experienced here in America. When my husband Barry's mom and dad passed you know there was an official viewing and it was quite a thing over two or three days.

But in Scotland, it is very simple. When someone has passed they're just put in a simple plain pine box and that's sealed. But I flew over from the states and asked if it would be possible for me to see my mom one last time.

They were very kind and they said, "Yeah. We can do that." And it wasn't because I thought my mom was there. I knew mom was home celebrating with Jesus. I just wanted to kneel beside her casket and say, "Well, done, mom! Well, done! You made pearls your whole life and now you're finally safely home."

There is something so beautiful about living a yes, Lord, life.

So I want to remind you of the three gifts that my mom gave me, and hopefully, there is something tucked in there for you too. That grace is unmerited favor; it is love stooping to where you are and lifting your head up, raising you up, holding you close, speaking to you so you'll never follow another voice.

And the pearls, my mom's pearls. Pearls are born from suffering and so too, you and I will go through things that we would not have signed up for but we're promised the

Lord's presence in the middle of them. So if you're in a tough place today just say to yourself, it's okay. The Lord is with me and I'm making pearls.

And then just like my mom, every single morning in life got up with that little picture over her bed: Yes, Lord. You can only do that when you know who you're saying yes to. Because that is a life of trust and faith. But I want you to know he is trustworthy and he is faithful.

I gave my life to Christ when I was 11. I read this morning that the gentleman who led me to Christ has finally made it all the way home to heaven. He spent his life sharing the grace of God, making pearls and living a yes, Lord life. And when you do that it changes everything. It changes how you see your life and what's important and what doesn't matter.

One of the things that has always been so important to all of us here at *Life Today* is our Water for LIFE campaign. It's horrifying, I just read recently the statistics of the number of people in our world who have zero access to clean water. It is such a basic human need. And the thought of so many mothers that I've met who have had to lay their little ones in the ground simply because they got a waterborne illness from contaminated water. And that's why we want to say in Jesus' name we want to change that. I want to ask you to help us. It's one of those things, there are all sorts of ways of making pearls. You can make pearls by welcoming Christ in the midst of your suffering. You can also make pearls in terms of reaching out even in your own struggles to touch the life of someone else. Living a yes, Lord life.

I want you to watch something with me and then I'm going to tell you how you and I can make a huge difference in the lives of many whose only request is a cup of clean water. Would you watch this?

On the mission field

TAMMY: Sheila, I've known you for years and I absolutely love you. I think the thing that I love the most is your heart for people -- and especially for broken people. I know that together we can relate to so many places we've been with *LIFE Outreach*. We've heard some pretty heartbreaking stories and here's another one today I want you to hear about it.

INTERPRETER: The way it started with my child, he became sick because we use this dirty water. So I took him to a hospital. But because it was very far away from here, my child lost a lot of blood. All they could say at the hospital was that he had a lack of blood. In the end, he died. His name was Ellis.

TAMMY: How old was he?

INTERPRETER: He was three years old.

TAMMY: I know it is hard for you to continue to share your story and talk about your loss. But I'm going to take this story and I'm going to be able to share it with people that I believe can help you, and that can bring clean water to you and your family, the rest of your children, and this entire village.

Thank you so much for allowing God to do something with the broken pieces of your life. And believing -- believing and trusting that help is on the way. I believe it is.

End of video

In the studio

SHEILA: We cannot let Ellis' death be for nothing. We can't let that darling three-year-old little boy who lost his life because there is so much about when you drink contaminated water, it gives you all sorts of diseases. He could probably have been vomiting and vomiting up blood, and then simply have no strength left at all. And these moms that we meet over and over and over again in so many of the 20 nations where we

work, you can just see the grief etched into their faces. How do you ever get over something like that? You don't.

But what I feel, and the staff feels this too here at *Life Today*, is there is an accountability once you know. There are a lot of things in the world that I don't know about but the things that the Lord has given me the privilege of knowing, I'm responsible for making sure that we keep telling their stories. As Tammy said, "I'm going to come back and I'm going to tell your story."

We're committed here to making sure that every other little Ellis in villages has a chance for a proper life. We have been able to drill so many wells over the years, but the need is great. And honestly, the need is specifically great at the moment. There is so much drought. So even when people dig sometimes they're not even hitting the water. It is not like, some people say, why can't they walk somewhere else? So many of the women I met, they get up at 4:00 in the morning and walk a long, long way to where there is at least some water source. But in so many of the villages the water is filthy. We can change that. That's the thing. That's why I don't despair because I think if there was nothing we could do, how would we cope? But there is a lot we can do.

So here's the deal. We're praying and planning to drill 350 new wells in over 20 nations this year. And here's how that breaks down for you and for me. The average cost of a well that will go down deep and last for the whole life of the village is about \$4800. Some of you can do that. Some of you have done that. And if you have done that, thank you, thank you! And let's do it again. But could you do \$48? \$48 will give clean water for ten people for their life! Think of how easily \$48 disappears. If you go and see a movie and get popcorn, it's gone! But it could give life to ten people. \$144 will give clean water to 30 people for the rest of their lives. It's not an oh, gosh, will you do it? It's let's do this! The Lord has given us so much. So let's reach out.

Let's think of something we can skip. Something we don't need, get rid of it, for something they can't live without. So please, will you go to your phone? Will you just

call the number on your screen and give the very best gift you can? Go online and let's together bring hope and healing. Let's take that dirty cup away from them and let's replace it with a cup of clean water in Jesus' name.

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

On the mission field

ISAK: These ladies have told us this is their only water source. This river that flows through next to their village here is the only place they can get water from. I think you might be watching this as a mother and you're saying, "How can those mothers give their children that water? I would never give my child water like that!"

Yeah, you wouldn't unless that water was the only water that your child could have. But it is so easy for us to change that. You see, if we put a water well here, if we bring Mission: Water for LIFE to this village and we drill a water well, we've got drilling rigs in the area. We have the ability to put water wells in. What we can do is instantly change the condition in this village and save the lives of children that will be contracting waterborne diseases, stop mothers from having to come down and take dirty diseased-filled water back to their families.

So please, go to the phone right now. Dial that number on your screen and give the best gift that you can give. You give the gift of life. Give the gift of water.

End of video

In the studio

SHEILA: Thank you! Isn't it great? Don't you think it is amazing that we're given this privilege of being able to do this? So many of you write and say, I wish I could come with you and I can't. But we bring these situations right to your home and say here's the privilege, here's what we can do. So maybe even talk it over as a family. What could we skip this week to be able to respond to this urgent need? If you haven't called yet, please keep calling. Just know that we love you and thank you for being who you are. And we'll see you next time on *Life Today*.