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Week 31: WFL

Sheila Walsh

"I've Never Been Here Before"

SHEILA: Hi, I'm Sheila Walsh. Welcome to *LIFE Today*. I was thinking this morning as I was driving into the studio, I'm the least likely person to be doing this. I want you to know I don't take it for granted. I think sometimes we get familiar with people on television or a platform in whatever environment and we think, oh they were just born to do that. That is certainly not the case for me at all. I was a very, very shy teenager. I found it very difficult to do any kind of public speaking.

In fact, it was only when my life kind of crashed and everything that I depended on fell away that I began to understand that in Christ you can do anything. When you take the focus off of you getting something right all the time or being perfect; how many times have you beat yourself over the head because you're not perfect? But when you stop all that and you just say, Lord, I'm available, it is amazing what God will do with even a broken life when you give him all the pieces.

And so when I was driving here today, I was thinking about some of the -- Jeremy, who is our associate executive producer sent me a list of the most common things that you call in for prayer about. I found myself praying over that list today; so much of it was anxiety, fear, loneliness, and uncertainty about the future. And so that's what I want to do today.

So that's why I'm excited about today's program. Because I want to kind of reintroduce you to three encounters that Jesus had with his closest friends and their reaction to each changing situation and what God was doing in their lives in the middle of difficult times.

So the first thing we're going to look at is Matthew chapter 14. Matthew's gospel is

fascinating. He tells us a lot of things that some of the others don't. They each have their own individual style. So I know you're familiar with this story, but I want to point out something at the end of it, what had happened just before the story, and what Jesus' closest friends had already gone through. But here's the thing, we've never been there before.

And that was what I was thinking about when I was praying for each one of you today. Some of you are finding yourself in a place where you say I've never been here before. I know God is faithful in that situation and I know God cares about that, but I've never been here before. We're living in times that are changing all the time. Sometimes it seems as if the world is out of control. But even though we might find ourselves in a situation where we can honestly say, I've never been here before, we need to remember that Jesus is the great I am. He is present.

So let me look at this first story and read it to you. Its subtitle is: Jesus Walks on Water. This is Matthew chapter 14, reading from verse 22; and I'm reading from the New Living Translation. *Jesus insisted that his disciples get back into the boat and cross to the other side of the lake while he sent the people home. After sending them home he went up into the hills by himself to pray. Night fell when he was there alone.* So you can tell he spent a lot of time on his own with his Father.

Meanwhile, the disciples were in trouble far away from land for a strong wind had arisen and they were fighting heavy waves. About 3:00 in the morning, Jesus came toward them walking on the water. When the disciples saw him walking on the water, they were terrified. In their fear they cried out, "It's a ghost!"

That probably seems strange to us but in the days that Christ was on the earth, there was a popular belief among many Jews that evil spirits lived under the surface of the water. So when they saw a figure walking toward them on the water they thought, is this a ghost? Is this an evil spirit?

But Jesus spoke to them at once. "Don't be afraid," he said. "Take courage, I am here." Then Peter called to him, "Lord, if it is really you, tell me to come to you walking on the water." Jesus said, "Yes! Come!" So Peter went over the side of the boat and walked on the water toward Jesus. But when he saw the strong wind and the waves, he was terrified and began to sink. "Save me, Lord!" He shouted. Jesus immediately reached out and grabbed him. "You have so little faith," Jesus said. "Why did you doubt me?"

When they climbed back into the boat the wind stopped and then the disciples worshipped him, "You really are the Son of God," they exclaimed.

Now, on the initial read of that story, if you're like me, you think, well, yeah, of course, they were terrified! Of course, Peter was terrified. The minute he -- it had to be quite a storm. Because in the Sea of Galilee they get used to these storms that just blow up out of nowhere. So this had to be quite something if they're still struggling at 3:00 in the morning. And then they see this figure. But Jesus immediately identifies himself and Peter said, "If it really is you, Lord, tell me to come to you on the water." Jesus said, "Come!"

I think my tendency in the past was to think, the reason he began to sink was because he took his eyes off Jesus; that's what we all have been taught. And I think, obviously, that is true. But I want to remind you of something that had just happened before that. So I'll read just a few verses.

So this is Matthew chapter 14, verse 13. Now, remember, this is just -- this is the same day that this has happened. The same day that Jesus had heard the news -- and that was the news about John the Baptist being beheaded, which had to be devastating news for Jesus. He was very close to his cousin. John was the one who prepared the way and now he's heard that because of the whim of a young selfish girl John the Baptist has been beheaded.

So we read: *As soon as Jesus heard the news, he left their boat to a remote area to be*

alone. But the crowds heard where he was headed and followed on foot from many towns. Jesus saw the huge crowd as he stepped from the boat, and he had compassion on them and healed their sick. That evening the disciples came to him and said, "This is a remote place, and it is already getting late. Send the crowds away so they can go to the villages and buy food for themselves." Jesus said, "That isn't necessary. You feed them."

And you'll remember, it was just a young boy who gave his five loaves of bread and two fish. Now we call that story "The feeding of the 5,000." But as you probably know, in biblical times they only counted men. So I would imagine there are probably 8,000-9,000 people there -- like an arena crowd. You're going to have moms, you're going to have children. So huge, huge crowd.

So let me ask you a question. Do you think the only food available on the hillside that day was that little boy's Lunchable? No! If you've got moms, you've got snacks, trust me on that. There was a lot of food there, but nobody thought it was enough. The only one who offered up what he had was this little boy.

And I love--. Mark gives the story from a slightly different angle. They all retell the story slightly differently but in Mark's gospel we read that Jesus said to one of the disciples, "What do you have?" Not I know you've got enough to feed them all -- what do you have?

And so they bring him, "Well, this is what we've got."

You have no idea the comfort I take from that. Every time before I'm either here on the set of *Life Today* or if I'm out on the weekend and I'm speaking to a large crowd, I always take a quiet little moment before I'm ever introduced. And I'll find a dark spot and I'll say, Lord, under-catered one more time. I don't have enough to feed your people. But all you've asked for is what do you have? So we bring what we do have, and Christ blesses it and breaks it and he feeds his people.

If you ever feel like you're not enough that is a lie from the pit of hell. All Jesus asks you and me is, what do you have? And then he does what only he can do. So from that little boy's lunch, you'll remember that Jesus blessed it and broke it, and began to distribute it. Now not only was there enough food for 8,000-9,000 people on the hillside, there were 12 baskets left over -- one for each disciple. And these are not the kind of little bread baskets that you and I put on our dinner table. These were the baskets that the Roman soldiers kept their swords in. So we're talking a significant basket. But it is no accident that it was one for every single disciple as if to say, now do you understand? Now, do you get it? Now, do you know? It is not ever going to be about you being "enough," it is always going to be about you bringing me your "not enough," and then I'll make it enough.

So I can only imagine the disciples gathering up all this food and then Jesus says to them, okay, get in the boat and go across the lake. And he dismisses the people and goes out to be alone with his Father. Now if you're sitting in the boat with your 11 friends and you're talking about what just happened, you have to think, what a miracle! That from a little boy's lunch he fed 8,000-9,000 people and had 12 baskets left over! So then Jesus walks on the water and he says to Peter, "Come on. Out you come." So Peter walks on the water.

But here's the thing, he'd never been there before. You see, he now knew, because we've got the whole Bible, we get to take in all the stories, everything Jesus did. They're living it from day to day. So what they know is wow! Jesus can take what we don't have and make it more than enough. But Peter had never been there before. I know you can feed people on the hillside but what about this situation when I'm sinking?

But there is even more that I find fascinating. I'm going to go back a few chapters and this is Matthew chapter eight. This is from verse 23: *Then Jesus got into the boat and started across the lake with his disciples. Suddenly, a fierce storm struck the lake, with waves breaking into the boat. But Jesus was sleeping. The disciples went and woke him up, shouting, "Lord, save us! We're going to drown!" Jesus responded, "Why are you*

afraid? You have so little faith!" And then he got up and rebuked the wind and the waves, and suddenly there was a great calm. The disciples were amazed. "Who is this man that even the winds and the waves obey him?"

So they had already been in a situation where Christ calmed a storm but that was when Jesus was in the boat with them. So Jesus is in the boat with us, he's going to calm the storm. If we're on a hillside and we don't have enough food, Jesus can provide more than enough. But what happens if you step out of the boat? What happens then? Peter had never been there before.

I just want to say to every one of you. If you find yourself in a place where you think, well, I've never been here before. Jesus, the great I am, is with you.

I read a quote that I want to read to you. I think it is just amazing. Because here's the truth, every one of us has been through storms. They seem to come for different reasons. Some storms can kind of correct us where we're getting a lot off gear and there is a storm that comes into our life and we think, O Lord, right! I need to kind of redirect to true north.

And some storms come to perfect us. In my study Bible by Warren Wiersbe, this is what he wrote. Jonah, you'll remember Jonah was the man that God called to go to a place called Nineveh and tell them to repent. Jonah didn't want to go so he got in a boat and went completely in the opposite direction. He was headed for Spain. So Warren Wiersbe says this: *"Jonah was in a storm because he disobeyed God and needed to be corrected. But the disciples were in a storm because they obeyed Christ and needed to be perfected."*

I think it is so significant that when Peter cries out Jesus says, "I am here." I wonder what the last time that you kind of copied down the great "I am" statements from scripture. I decided a couple of weeks ago to do that just as a personal exercise. I was flying out to San Diego, and I had my notebook and a Bible. I thought I'm just going to write down all

the different "I am" statements: I am the bread of life. I am the way, the truth, and the life. And there is something about taking every one of those and just kind of meditating on them.

If you're like me, I find the world kind of confusing at the moment. There is so much evil that's apparent evil. There is so much that's going on that seems to be natural disasters all around the world. Everything seems to be shaky. Nothing feels quite like it did before the COVID pandemic hit. Don't you think it all feels just a little different, even though it's more back to normal but some things still seem confusing?

There has never ever been a greater time for you and I to run -- to run in the direction of Jesus. I don't know what your daily routine is like, but I've found, I think it was maybe even Beth Moore who said this, but I've heard Christine Caine say it too, that Christ saved my soul but the Word of God is saving my mind. That is absolutely true for me. Because when we just have a daily diet of what's on the news it just seems to get worse and worse every single day. But when we have a daily diet of the Word of God, this never changes. You turn on the TV tomorrow and it will be different news than what you heard today. You open the Word of God, and the news remains the same -- that God is with us, that God is faithful, that God is for us.

I find myself wondering sometimes if some of you are just flicking through channels and you see something that makes you pause and stop and kind of lean in and listen, and what you think about the things that we talk about here at *Life Today*, whether it is James or Betty teaching or whether it is Randy and I on that set or if I'm here on this set. You wonder, is that all real? Can I trust God? There is a lot of press about, you'll hear about believers falling and terrible mistakes happening, or people intentionally sinning, and you think, *it is all a crock*.

No, I want you to know the one person who will never, never, never let you down is Jesus. And if you don't know this Jesus, I got such a sweet letter a couple of weeks ago from a lady who is in prison for a long, long time. And if you're watching, yes, I heard

your prayer requests and I've been lifting them up before the Lord. But you know sometimes you find yourself in a place where you think look at my life. If there is a God, why is my life such a mess? Jesus did not promise us a perfect life, but he promised us his presence. And he promised that he had gone ahead of us to prepare a place for every single one of us.

If you don't know this Jesus personally, I would just love to let you know how simple it is. We read in God's Word in the book of Romans, that whoever calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. Not if you've led a good life, not if you've never done this and never done that -- but whoever calls on the name of the Lord. That's all you have to do. You can simply say, you can pray a simple prayer like this where you say, Jesus, I believe that you are the son of God. And I know that I'm a sinner and I want to be saved. I ask you to forgive me for my sin. I want to be like one of your followers. It is not just a come into my heart. I want to follow you for the rest of my life.

And I promise you, if you've prayed that prayer, there is a celebration going on in heaven. And no matter what your past has been, we read in the Psalms, it's removed as far as the east is from the west, and God remembers it no more. You have a brand-new beginning want if you've done that, write to us, let us know. We'd love, love, love to know that. But if you're a believer and you find yourself in a place today where you're thinking, I've never been here before, I want to remind you the great "I am" is with you and you are not alone.

One of my favorite things that I have the privilege of doing here at LIFE has been part of our mission outreaches. I think one of the most heartfelt, important missions that we do is called Water for LIFE. We take the little of what we can live without to give some people what they cannot live without. Would you watch this? And then I'll tell you how you and I can get involved. Watch this.

On the mission field

TAMMY: This is absolutely horrible to think that this is his only source of water. I've watched child after child come in this little pool of water and dip their precious little cup and drink this water. It is horrific!

My heart aches to know that they struggle every single day to survive! But they have nothing else that they can do. This is it! This is their only source of water. So if they don't even dip in to take a drink of this, they won't survive.

This water brings death. But we are on a mission to bring life. And not just a quick fix but something that will change this community for generations to come. We can change this for them. We can come in here with a drill. We can drill them a water well.

Won't you partner with me today? Together I believe we can make a huge impact into this community. Together we can make a difference.

End of video

In the studio

SHEILA: You know, Tammy is so right! Together, we can make the difference. It's so interesting when you are able to be there on the ground, one of the places where we have our Water for LIFE mission. I remember on one of my first trips before I got on the flight that DFW Dallas Airport, I just went in and bought a big bottle of water and stuck it in my backpack thinking nothing about it. And then within a few hours, I'm in another country. I'm in Africa and we're driving to places where the nearest water source is something that could take their lives.

What they do is they have these hand-dug wells, which only go about six, eight feet down in the ground and the water is filthy. You saw there, Tammy showing you, what the water looks like. And honestly, with everything that's in me, I had to hold myself back because I wanted to knock the cup out of the child's hand because it was filthy water. I wouldn't give that water to my dog. But then I thought, what right do I have to do that unless I'm coming with a cup of clean water in the other hand? And that's our passion here at *Life*

Today.

This year, we want to drill 350 new water wells in over 20 nations. Honestly, I wish I could take you with me and you could see the difference that it makes to go from one village where almost every village where there is not a fresh well-being drilled, all the mothers have lost at least one child to waterborne illness. Can you imagine that? We take it for granted! I remember, even as I'm standing by that hand-dug filthy well, I've still got that bottle of water in my backpack, and the contrast is just outrageous to me.

But now we have a way of doing that and it is very doable. We wanted to make it something that everybody could be part of. So the average cost of a well is about \$4800 and that will give water to a whole village for their life, for about a thousand people. Some of you could do that and if you can, please do that! But that's too much for some of you, but could you do \$48? That will provide clean water for ten people for the rest of their life. I mean, you go to any of these famous coffee shops and buy two or three of those fancy drinks and that amount is gone. But you could give life to ten people! \$144 will give clean water to 30 people for their life.

And for any gift at all, we have this beautiful devotional set that will build you up in the Word of God. For \$100, you get these great coasters. I love these! They've got scriptures on them that every day when you go and drink your coffee it will remind you to pray for the mission of Water for LIFE.

But would you do something? So often we don't do something because we can't -- we think we can't do enough. Remember what Jesus said? What do you have? What do you have? If you give what you have, and I give what I have, we can change the world. Please go to the phone. Please call us right now. Go online and give what you have, 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:

SHEILA: This hand-dug well is full of contaminated water. It's the only source of water for this village. The mothers and their children come out here every day with their buckets and gather water. And the mothers know there is a potential that this water will kill their children because there are all sorts of animal dung.

But this is the water that is killing these children, and that is why they need a well, a drilled well that will go down deep and give fresh, clean water. This should not be normal for any child, and we want to give them a new normal, in Jesus' name. Fresh, clean, safe water!

End of video

In the studio:

SHEILA: Thanks so much for watching, and for reaching out. If the lines are busy, please keep calling. If we all do what we can do, it literally is life-changing. So help us -- help us not just meet our goal this year, wouldn't it be amazing if this year, we exceeded our goal? I've been in the villages where the water wells have been dug and there on the side, it says: *LIFE Outreach International*. You did that! Let's do it again.

We love you. See you next time!