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Week 32: WFL

Randy Robison and Sheila Walsh

Ann Voskamp #2

RANDY: Welcome to *LIFE Today*. I'm Randy Robison. Sheila Walsh is with me. And Ann Voskamp is back with us.

ANN: I'm so grateful to be here!

RANDY: I have some follow-up questions from the other show, but I've got to let the audience know if you missed the other program with Ann Voskamp just go to LifeToday.org. All of our programs are there. You need not miss anything. But today, we're looking forward to more of this wonderful conversation. It got a little deep.

SHEILA: A little real. That's what I always think about you. I think it is very -- that you are very real. Every time I've ever -- I mean I've read everything you've ever written and I've had the joy of hearing you speak, and there is definitely something that happens. I don't know if you see this but any time you speak, I snuck in at the back of a, I think it was a Women of Joy or something, people lean forward. There is an actual --

ANN: That's a good thing.

SHEILA: Of course, it is! If you don't want to listen you're like whoa. [Laughing] But there is an absolute leaning in because I think what you write about, and this new book *Waymaker* is amazing, but you write of a lot of painful stuff. And I'm thinking right now of someone who is watching and listening in and thinking, well, I'm glad God made a way for you when your marriage was in trouble but I find myself in an impossible situation. What would you say to that?

ANN: First of all, *Waymaker* talks about pain and suffering. It is a descriptive book, not a

prescriptive book because every marriage and every relationship is different. I don't think we apply a formula to anyone's relationship. What *Waymaker* is doing is inviting you to just -- sometimes we don't even have the strength to turn, all we need to be able to do is turn our eyes upon Jesus the one who comes the whole way to us, and to be able to hear him say, this is the way, walk in it. That's going to look different for every person, that person in a difficult place, between a rock and a hard place, can they trust that God is the goal, not a place? God is the goal. Christ will not fail. Your way home is guaranteed. That's the bottom line. When you know that you can be bankrupted, slandered, fired, or vilified, your worst nightmare can happen. But when you know the God who is with you loves you and holds you, there is nothing to be afraid of. You may not know what the road ahead holds, but Jesus is your road and he will hold you all the way through.

So that person who is between a rock and a hard place, I know what it is like to say I want a road map. And God says I want a relationship. We want clarity and God says no, I want communion with you. What he wants you to do is to come closer. When you're close enough to hear his voice, he will show you the way through. So when we're in situations where we say there is no way, not when you have Jesus he says I am the way -- we always have a way.

So can we trust that I don't need a path that's dirt and gravel and pavement, I need a path who is a person, the person of Jesus. So I think lots of times I so much wanted a way through. No, no! Did I have a way of life that will keep me in the way himself and he, the person, would be my way through? I think it is a paradigm shift when we're in the middle of difficult places.

RANDY: Is this something you discovered way back when and it just changed your life? Or is this something that you have to kind of remind yourself, walk through? Right?

ANN: That's such a good question. Such a good question, Randy, because I think I'm the person, the woman of chronic soul amnesia -- I am constantly forgetting. So this isn't something that happened ten years ago and I have now quote-unquote "arrived!" I honestly, really believe that arriving is about being in Christ himself. That's a daily process because the world is constantly turning us. We're constantly running into obstacles. *Waymaker* is the story of the last five years

of my life. So I've been in places in the last five years where it felt like there was no way through and realizing did I have a way of life, a rule of life, spiritual disciplines that no matter what was happening, no matter what the waves looked like in my life I had a practice of life, a habit of life, a daily rhythm that would keep me in the way himself. And that way life began to hold back the waves to make a Red Sea road through. Sometimes we think of spiritual disciplines as a burden, an obligation, and actually, those spiritual disciplines are your route to freedom. They're taking you out of bondage to all the things of the world and bringing you into bonding with Jesus himself.

RANDY: I think a lot of times we want that Red Sea miracle just poof! Everything goes away.

ANN: And without intentionality on our part. And really, the Red Sea road is happening -- it's why I love the cover of *Waymaker*. It looks like it is all waves, that's all we can see but really, when we can't see that he's working, he's parting the waves and making a Red Sea road where we can't see.

Really, I think the Red Sea road is happening all around us all the time. We don't see them as Red Sea roads. Can I trust that this storm in my life, this strong wind right now isn't a bad thing? It is blowing a Red Sea road, not to meet necessarily what I want but to who I want. What is in the way is making the way for me to walk more in the way of Jesus. That obstacle could be my miracle that turns me towards Jesus as opposed to turning me towards a mirage that the world is offering me. So what's in the way can be the way that I turn towards prayer, drives me towards scripture, that leads me into closer intimacy with Jesus.

I say this not as a cliché but out of deeply painful stories in my own life. The story I would never sign up for and never want was actually what drew me closer to Jesus himself. So many of my friends have gone through losing a child, cancer, their worst-case scenario. God used that terrible "no way" to be the way that drew them into the deepest, far deeper intimacy with Jesus than they could ever have imagined. So actually, I have to, not just for the big things but on the daily, the little things I have to say, Ann, what is in the way is actually making the way for me to walk more in the way of Jesus. Can I trust that when there are obstacles in the way? The obstacle can

be my miracle.

SHEILA: That's a whole different way of -- it's like having your eyes washed the second time by Jesus.

ANN: But I think a lot of the time, the reason we're not where we want to be is we're not reading the right map to what is the ground under our feet. Thinking about what is in the way is making the way for me to walk in the way of Jesus is like someone handing you a different map that matches the topography of a broken world where there is suffering and there is pain. But God is going to use all of it for our sanctification, for our restoration and restoring. So can I not push against it and despise it? But see, no, this can be a gift in the hands of a good Abba Father who truly does love me.

RANDY: Here's where I think people get stuck. I think they see the obstacle, the pain, the circumstance, the cancer, the loss as from God, instead of God making a way despite that brokenness -- through that.

ANN: Through that. I really believe, I think it is Kay Arthur, way back I used to do all of the Precept Bible studies with Kay Arthur, she always said, "Nothing comes into my life unless it is filtered through his fingers of love." So I can trust that nothing is happening in the world that hasn't come through his fingers of love. But he is a good God that out of the wreckage he is going to bring resurrection. I've seen it, I believe it, I stand upon it.

SHEILA: One of the eye-opening moments for me in my own life was several years ago, Barry and I had to file for bankruptcy. I never imagined that would be a part of our story. I remember showing up that morning for bankruptcy court and we were case like 11. I'm sitting there and I'm watching all the other people who are waiting for their names to be called. And I watched this one man who has got a paper tissue and he's wringing his hands and it is falling like snow around him. It was so clear to me in that moment, I remember thinking, Jesus came with me to bankruptcy court. That there is no place that you and I will ever go that he is not gone before and he is right there with us. And it is life-changing!

ANN: It is! You can end up in a place where you think, how did I ever end up here? I never would have imagined! But you don't go there alone. He is there with you. And in him, he washes us, he covers us from the shame, he carries us all the way through. The way home is guaranteed.

RANDY: There is another thing in what you're saying that is a serious shift for most people. Which is to say if the object, even of this entire -- of life -- everything is to put us into relationship with Christ, then kind of the in-between how -- it changes the important things in life. Does that make sense? That person that's going through the struggle right now that's thinking, oh, my gosh! We've got a bankruptcy. Or I need this job. Or I've got a child, I've got a spouse -- problem, problem, problem, how do they get past the junk and go, okay, the way -- the place I'm trying to get to is a closer relationship with Christ, that's his goal so that's my goal.

ANN: So what does that look like? So *Waymaker* unpacks Exodus 14, how the children of Israel left Egypt and came across the Promised Land. What does that Red Sea road look like? The first thing they do is be still and trust that God is going to deliver us. It is the hardest thing to do. It is the hardest thing to do! When you're in a no-way situation, you want to be the guy ripping apart the kleenex because it is really hard to be still. But that posture first of stillness is that God is still on his throne and I can still trust him. So in the middle of that hard place, at first stillness -- stillness to know God.

Sacred is the acronym that is the spine of *Waymaker*, the spine of a way of life. Stillness to know God. Attentiveness to hear God. You can't hear God unless you're first going to be still. So can you be still to know God, attentiveness to hear God? We always have questions of God, why is this story like this? Why are you doing this? God also has questions of us when he says, "Who do you say that I am?" Can you be still and answer God? Actually, I say that you're my Abba Father who truly loves me and is for me. That begins to shift your own paradigm and how you begin to see a situation.

The C of sacred is cruciform. How am going to live cruciformed -- like Christ in this particular situation? Which means to live in a posture of surrender, of sacrifice. What am I going to let go

of to move closer to Christ? I write in *Waymaker* that the word for *sacrifice* in Hebrew is korban. Our understanding of sacrifice is I'm going to lose something here. I don't want sacrifice. The Hebrew understanding of korban is to gain. You let go to come near; you let go to gain more. So can I see what am I going to let go of? What am I going to live cruciform-like today? What am I going to surrender to you, Lord so I can move closer to you?

The R of sacred: Revelation. How can I know the direction of my life unless I've opened up scripture today and have a fresh revelation of who God is?

RANDY: Today.

ANN: Today! Not hoarded up manna from yesterday or last week that's going to fester and go rotten, but I need a fresh revelation. So before I step out into the day, have I been still? Have I been attentive to hear God's questions and proclaim his character? How am I going to live cruciformed today? What am I going to surrender? Do I have a fresh revelation? Are we going to write that verse down on a sticky note that I can carry with me so that I can keep reorienting myself to the way himself?

The E of sacred is examine, what am I afraid of? Jesus asked his disciples in Mark, they're in the water and the waves and the storm, what are you so afraid of? I think a lot of times we're driven and motivated by deep fears in our lives. Unless we have a practice of life that we can examine, what am I afraid of? That poor man, ripping apart his Kleenex, what is he afraid of? The shame, the loss of reputation. When you can start to -- we can only name -- what we name is what we can regulate. Once you start to name the fears that bring God into it, the devil only dances in the dark. Once I name it, I bring it into the light. So to have a practice of life, to say every day, what am I afraid of? In scripture, it's over 360 times, almost one for every day. Do not be afraid or what are you afraid of? He knows we are fearful. So the practice of saying what am I afraid of?

And the D of sacred is doxology. There is always, always, always, even in the midst of the very darkest places something to be grateful for. Before we go out into the day, do you have a practice where I'm going to write down even three things that I'm grateful for today? Because that says

the God who's provided for me yesterday, that I can give thanks for the way that he's shown up yesterday, I can trust him that he will show up today and he will show up tomorrow. Count the blessings so that you know who you can count on.

For me, that sacred way of life stillness, attentiveness, cruciformity, revelation, examine, doxology -- that sacred way sets me apart for intimacy with God. Takes me out of bondage. When those Israelites came out of Egypt, when he parts that Red Sea, what he is saying is, I'm taking you out of bondage, not for you just to go wherever you want to go. I'm taking you out to bring you in. So many times we want out of our story. But you want out of your story -- he's using that out of to bring you into closer intimacy with him. So you need a way of life that keeps you intimately connected, attached to the *Waymaker* himself.

SHEILA: There is such a gift in God's questions. I think of God's question to Adam and Eve, "Where are you?" Elijah, "Where are you?"

ANN: Yes, where are you? If it matters in real estate, location, location, location, do you have a practice of life where you're saying, where is my soul in relation to God right now? He asks Hagar, where are you coming from and where are you going to? I think so much of our lives we're kind of apathetic about where we are going. But do you have a life that you're still long enough to say, where is my soul really? Where am I headed? And where do I want to go to? Jesus asked the disciples in the New Testament, "What do you want?" We need to pause long enough to say, what do I want here? And is it aligned with King Jesus? Is it aligned with the kingdom of God?

Luther says that our heart is this idol factory. So when I slow down enough to say, what do I want? Those wants may not be bad, but they may be idols. And in *Waymaker* I confess, the things I was addicted to, ultimately, was idolatry. I was taking care of myself and putting myself above God. If we don't have a way of life that slows us down enough to call these things out, maybe that's why we're not finding a way through.

RANDY: So you told -- I'm curious if you're referring to -- the story you told on the other

program, I won't ask you to recount it, but you had a heart issue that landed you in the hospital. And you talked about how you'd come to a position where you'd gone from here to --

ANN: Living a cruciformed outward life to living a self-protected life.

RANDY: Here's my question, was that on purpose, or did that just happen over time? How do we get there?

ANN: I think it is our default. Our default is to -- is not to live cruciformed. We can only do that through the power of the Holy Spirit. Our default is to -- everything that we do is to turn inward, is to take care of self. When we are in Christ, only when we are in Christ can we start to live cruciformed, like the cross, because then we're not afraid of that posture of vulnerability. Because we know we are -- I think lots of times what we're trying to do is, Lord, can I please have a way through life that I'm always safe? And what Jesus says is, if you come to the foot of the cross and you give your life to me, I promise you, you will always be soul safe.

Everything else in our life, we can end up bankrupt, we can end up losing the people we love, and we can end up in a story we don't want. But in Christ, we are always soul safe and held. We can experience shalom, complete wholeness and completeness -- not because of the things of this world. I think sometimes we go through the deepest, darkest valleys because he wants us to lose hope in the things of this world and realize that the only thing we can hope in is Christ himself.

RANDY: Which we would view as negative. But if we understand God's ultimate goal it is the grace of God.

ANN: Yes! It is actually a gift. I can trust a good Abba Father.

SHEILA: You're going to want to have this book for yourself. Honestly, it is a phenomenal book. So we're going to tell you how you can get a hold of your own copy.

You've been so good over the years in helping us drill water wells in countries where they have

no access to water so we're back again to ask you, would you do it one more time because the need is great. So watch this and then I'll tell you how you can get a hold of your own copy of *Waymaker*.

On the mission field

ANNOUNCER: Like any mother, Beatrice longs to see her children happy and healthy. And in pursuing her desires for their well-being, Beatrice simply wants to provide them with the basics of life. But in Beatrice's case her hopes for her children ever having any kind of a future have been shattered because of their water source.

Open Captions

>> I felt really bad that it was the water that caused my child to get sick and die.

ANNOUNCER: This is never how Beatrice intended life to be, losing a child because her water supply is contaminated. And then knowing that she has no other choice but to give the same water to her other children.

Open Captions

>> I'm afraid my other children will die from drinking this water just like my youngest child did.

ANNOUNCER: What makes Beatrice's situation even more tragic is knowing that a clean water well could make the difference between life and death, not only for her children but for all of the children in her village.

Open Captions

>> I would say thank you to the people that would be able to give us clean water. I would jump, dance and clap my hands and be thankful for this blessing.

[Water splashing]

End of clip

In the studio

SHEILA: You know the only uncontaminated water available to so many of these moms are the tears that flow down their faces. I'll never forget my first morning in a village in Zambia. And one of these really sweet moms asked me would I like to go with her to see where her child is buried. It was just -- I didn't know how to describe that privilege.

Her name was Merci. And as we walked, it was quite a walk. As we got closer, I literally had to hold her up because she couldn't bear the weight of her own pain. And we both knelt beside that little grave. It was as if this cry from heaven, as if God's tears were watering her child's grave.

I remember getting up and the rest of that day thinking, I will never be the same person again. Because what these moms are asking for is the most basic -- they're incredible women. They get up at 4:00 in the morning and they will walk for miles to come to this horrible, hand-dug well that is filthy -- the kind of water I wouldn't give to my dog. But it's all they have to give to their children.

Can you imagine if you're a mom and you've already buried a child but you're giving exactly what you gave to that child to the children you still have? You know we live in a land of plenty, overabundance, and I just think wouldn't it be great if we start to skip some things we don't need to give them the very thing that they cannot live without. We can do this, Randy.

RANDY: We can. You used an interesting word just now and I heard in another piece where you said it is not an obligation, it is a privilege. I thought, is it? I had that moment. And I think it is a little bit about what we've been talking about with Ann out of her book. Because I had this kind of transaction like we're supposed to do this as Christians. We must do this for God. I thought no. I think, Sheila, you're right.

\$48 will give ten people clean water for a lifetime; \$144 -- 30 people. Maybe you have the finances to give an entire well of \$4800. The beautiful thing is that you're invited to represent God, Jesus Christ, and his love through sacrificial giving to strangers, people you don't know,

people that might not know God. You have this chance to represent him. How? Not in word but in deed which speaks a lot louder.

I'm asking you, do you want to represent our savior to people who are dying? You can do it today. Go online, go to the phones, and make the best gift you can. I can promise you, standing on what my parents have built all these years, I can promise you, that if you trust us to represent God to these people around the world, we will fulfill that. We will do what we say. So join us. I pray you'll do it and I pray you'll 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

RANDY: I hope you're going to the phones or going online and making the best gift you can. We can impact people with the love of Christ and Water for LIFE. And Sheila, I hope that with their gift they will request Ann's book!

SHEILA: Ann, I think it is the most perfect combination of the power of story and falling in love with Jesus. It's just absolutely beautiful! Thank you so much for being our guest!

ANN: Oh, I'm just so grateful. The gift was all mine. For each of us to know amid our detours, that detours can be the way the destinies come true because Jesus comes the whole long way right to you. He is our dream come true.

SHEILA: So beautiful -- beautiful! Rich! Powerful! We love you and we will see you next time on *Life Today*!

RANDY: Bye-bye!