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Week 34: WFL, last week

Sheila Walsh

Hiltibidal

SHEILA: Hi! Welcome to *LIFE Today*. I'm Sheila Walsh and I'm so glad you're going to spend the next few minutes with us. And you'll be glad too because I get the privilege of reading so many books throughout the year and it is something I love. I love, love, love to read. And I love to read about what God is doing in somebody else's life that I can learn from. And when I got a copy of this book by Scarlet Hiltibidal called *You're the Worst Person in the World*, I thought I'm immediately intrigued. You're going to love her.

Scarlet, it is so great to have you with us.

SCARLET: I'm so honored to be here talking to you. Thank you!

SHEILA: I have to tell you, when I read the title at first, I thought, gosh, what an interesting title! But when I read the reason behind it, I love it! Tell us how this came to be the title.

SCARLET: Okay. Well, the title. I'll tell you the title story first because usually with a book the title can sometimes come last, and the idea comes first. In my first book, it was more that way. This, here's how it happened. My closest friend, I call her, like *Anne of Green Gables*, my bosom friend, Katie, and I was showing her the mockups for my first book for the cover. And my first book was called *Afraid of All the Things* and it was kind of my testimony, memoir slash how I've learned to rest in the gospel of Jesus and stop living in panic mode all the time. But the tone of it is not serious. It was hopefully humorous, and I wanted the cover to convey that it was light-hearted. And so it has like fangs and a syringe on the cover, which I thought was great and funny. But the color scheme was up for debate.

I was like, "Katy, what do you think of the dark red?"

And she was like, "Honestly, Scarlet, I mean I love you, I'm so excited."

She is like, "A book about fear that's light-hearted with the dark red, it's honestly a little scary. I know that's not what you're going for but I'm just so excited. It's your first book. Even if it was just a blank white book on a coffee table that said *You're the Worst Person in the World* I would still be so excited. I laughed so hard imagining a Christian book that I'm so happy to see it. This is the first time I've talked about it, like physically seen it. And this was in 2019 or 2018. I said, "Katie, that's so funny!" Just the thought of a Christian book with that title. I said that's got to happen someday. So that's how -- that's how. There was no real idea.

And then I started thinking about it and I started thinking about my testimony, which I'd already written. Anxiety was such a huge thread in my life, and it continues to be something I battle. I've written about it multiple times because it's that thing I fight through. I fight to set my mind on things above, not on earthly things -- because if you look at the earthly things, they are not getting any less scary.

And so that's where I was at. And then I was thinking about that title, and I thought, throughout my life, this striving for goodness and perfectionism was so tied into my history and my anxiety, and even after I became a believer when I was 14, I had this kind of backward Christianity that I was living out where I totally believed that I was saved, a child of God, but the way I lived was not with joy and peace.

And I would be panicked about that because I would think, aren't Christians supposed to be the joyful peaceful ones? And they are, but I wasn't so I was like well, I better earn God's favor because I don't want him to say, "Depart from me. I never knew you." I would pull these verses out without having actually studied them, without holding them up to the whole story and the character of God. And I would just be like, well, I guess I

better be really good. I think I'm saved. And so anyway, that kind of led to me being the worst in every category because when you're focused on yourself and your goodness then you're doing the opposite of what we're made to do which is to worship and glorify God and point people to him.

That's what the book is about. It's stories of how horrible I am. I hope readers get more out of it than, man, she's awful! And I hope they see their worseness and that that leads them to repentance which leads them to the joy and peace of walking with Jesus.

SHEILA: Yeah. I'll be honest with you, when I read through the book, so many chapters I was like yep, me too, me too! And even like you talk about your passion to be a great writer and you call yourself the worst epitaph writer. What does that mean?

SCARLET: Here's what that means. Mrs. Yates was the first person who told me I was good at writing when I was --

SHEILA: Yay, Mrs. Yates!

SCARLET: Mrs. Yates, I love you! I was in the ninth or tenth grade and I was like oh, I love writing! So that was when the dream was a real dream, and she gave us this assignment. She said, "I want you to write your epitaph. So think about how you want to be remembered, like what would go on your gravestone?" And my mom, unfortunately, saved my epitaph. I have it in a scrapbook in my garage. Thank you, mother! No, I'm grateful. She saved everything. I'm so grateful.

But it's like one of those cringey like um! I wrote an author's epitaph. It was so horrible. It was like old English. I said it better there: Here and theretofore lies Scarlet Elizabeth and her quill was --

It was horrible! And so yeah, that whole first chapter is, I talk about that and how I kind of thought that achieving things and dreams realized would make me worthy of being

loved and happy. And John Piper actually, I talk about it in the book, he preached this sermon in 1986 and he talked about William Carey's epitaph. I want to get it right. I think he said, and William Carey accomplished so many things, did so many amazing things for the Lord and his gravestone, I looked up a picture of it. It is amazing. It says: "A wretched, poor, helpless worm on his kind arms I fall." Something like that. I mean that's so beautiful, and what a happy place to be to realize that we're all that helpless.

So anyway, yeah, in that chapter I just talked about striving, realizing the dream. The dream would never do what I wanted the dream to do leaving a legacy. If I could rewrite that epitaph it would look a lot more like William Carey's because that is joy and that is peace and that's happiness when you are aware of how much you need the Lord.

SHEILA: That's why I think your book, even though you call it, *You're the Worst Person in the World*, to me, this is the gospel because unless you realize how wretched we are without the Lord. I mean I did the same. I tried for so many years to be the perfect Christian because I didn't want God to be disappointed in me. But it is only when you realize how we fall in so many areas. I have to admit, and this is not kind, but your story of Christmas of 2020, I laughed out loud!

SCARLET: I hoped for that. There needed to be some redeeming of Christmas 2020.

SHEILA: Can you just give us a little -- just a kind of little synopsis of the glory of that Christmas?

SCARLET: I don't even know how to give a synopsis. Even writing it, I was like this sounds like a made-up story. I mean okay. So 2020, of course, 2020, my family went to a cabin in Gatlinburg on the top of a mountain. This is not like my family. We had never done anything like it. My parents were super generous. They invited me, my three kids, my husband, my uncle, my grandma, my sister and her husband, all those people under one roof in this beautiful cabin. Everything was dreamy and wonderful.

And then Christmas Eve, my dad was like, "I'm going to dress up as Santa." So he goes up the stairs and then I see the lights flicker on and off, on and off, and I'm like, oh wow! He is getting into this. Like, go dad! And then we realize he is not flickering the lights, it is a power outage caused by a blizzard. Long, long, long story short, we ended up with no working toilets, no food because it was a rental, so you had to get the food out and people -- it was the whole thing.

But Christmas, I think it was Christmas Eve or Christmas day after people started using the woods as a bathroom, my dad was like executive decision, we're getting off the mountain. We all tried to get down the mountain. It's icy, icy, icy! Straight down. They all make it. My family doesn't make it. Our car turns sideways.

I'm so sorry. I don't know how to shorten this.

SHEILA: You know of all the phrases you use I just love, you use this "cry hiking" where you're just trying to get somewhere. But the thing I love, the way you tie it back to the Lord is your dad is clearly your hero. He came and rescued you in a blue truck. But you tie that back to God the Father. How could you have been able in your life, Scarlet to see even in these worst moments, these moments where you think I would not have written it like this -- the presence of God.

SCARLET: Yeah! I'm so grateful. I dedicated it to my hero in the blue Jeep because he rented a four-wheel drive when even the national guard that my mom called would not come to rescue us. But it was like wow! What an example! The "cry hiking" which was, of course, I'm worried my kids are going to get frostbite. We're not prepared, and we were stuck.

We went up to the cabin and we didn't know if my dad was down there because we couldn't get a cell connection. So I'm just kind of like hoping he's there. And then to see him with the blue Jeep standing there, I fall into his arms. It was like one, physically and practically like I was disgusting and hadn't showered and was so hungry and gross and

grateful to just be out of that situation.

But of course, even while we were in it, it was impossible to not see the spiritual connection of like, oh! Even on a vacation on top of a mountain in America where we have so much more than we need, it takes one second to realize like oh no! Like I'm very needy. Give us this day our daily bread. I was raised in the church. It was like oh, yeah! Give us this day, thanks for the food, God or not pray, or pray and I'm just like oh, great!

But to be in a situation where there is no more food, we pulled frozen waffles out of a trash bag to give our kids because we didn't know if my dad would be there. It was like okay, I really, really need Jesus to provide for me and keep me safe and everything, every second of the day. And I am safe in the ways -- my soul is safe in the ways that matter most. If we hadn't made it off of that mountain, we are secure, our eternity is secure.

And so it was just a horrible but beautiful healthy reminder of just remembering like you just said, remembering our need. I think a lot of people never get there and then some people get there but they forget. Like how, I think it was maybe two days where I was like running water! And already, after two days, I'm like, oh yeah, running water.

SHEILA: But you draw so many beautiful parallels between your dad coming to be there for you and the way that Christ as the shepherd. And the way that you talk about sheep. We just think, oh, nice, furry lambs. But you talk about the fact that they're helpless unless the shepherd comes and looks for them and provides a place for them and then protects them.

SCARLET: Yeah. My dad rescuing us on the mountain is such a beautiful picture of being -- now, first of all, he is my adoptive dad, that's the other part of it. The fact that we were adopted into God's family and so now we have his protection, his provision, his love, his -- we get to be his kids that he cares for when we cannot care for ourselves.

But just the added layer of when I was eight years old, I needed a good dad. And he

swooped in like a superhero. He was on the SWAT team. He still has a triangle-shaped body like Johnny Bravo. He is in his 60s and he's like, physically, you're like, oh, that's a superhero! Got his pinky shot off fighting bad guys. He is amazing. So yeah, he is my hero. But also, like I didn't -- I needed a dad and now I have this inheritance, and I have this grandfather to my kids.

It's so funny, I write about my adoption in there too. One of our three daughters is adopted, and I was so scared of the idea of adoption for so many years. Even though I was this beneficiary of this practical blessing of having this awesome dad bring me into his family.

SHEILA: When you say you have one adopted daughter but sometimes when people have adopted, they think they're going to get a little baby. But you and your family flew all the way to China. Tell us about Joy.

SCARLET: Joy, she is the best! Okay, so Joy is our little miracle girl. Like I said, I was not the person you would think of as the sign-me-up-to-do-the-scary-hard thing. I was not that person. I was the let me protect me and mine. Jesus, please keep us safe today. Give us this day our daily bread. That was my Christianity for a lot of years.

And with Joy, it was honestly, God using other believers who were just regular people. I think in my head, I mean I was a pastor's wife, Bible college graduate, knew the gospel backward and forwards, but I still lived like, oh, some people live radically for God but I just want to live a quiet life and protect my people.

And I remember seeing this cousin of mine who had a bunch of biological kids, was adopting kids with special needs from China, and I honestly kind of avoided them. It was like their act of obedience was shining a light on my fear and my disobedience, honestly. Because there were things in my life God was pushing me to do that I didn't do because I was scared.

So anyway, I was in a small group regularly. I actually kind of let my guard down which is not my normal way of being with people, and just started studying the Bible next to people who loved him, who were normal, who had bad days and good days. I saw the family again and we were seated together at a wedding. And I'm like oh, they're just people and this is just a family. And they have hard stuff and sad stuff and happy stuff just like my family. And so that kind of softened me toward it. Little Joy, the short version is God swung all these doors open, provided, and led us to her. Not a baby, like you said.

SHEILA: Four years old.

SCARLET: Yeah, she turned four right when we brought her home. She was born with no ears so she couldn't hear, couldn't walk, and wasn't potty trained. And that was a lot more than the checklist that we said we were open to. God just kept nudging us in her direction and we were like, okay, God, we think you're leading us here so we're going to say not no today. It was just like a series of days where we said not no. And he did a miracle of healing.

We didn't know if he would. I mean bringing her home, when we first met her in China we were like okay, God. Our idea of this was we're going to learn sign language, we're going to teach her the beautiful story of Jesus, and she's going to learn it. And then when we met her, we were like, okay, she might not ever learn anything. She might be a body in our house that we're caring for. Okay, and that was like a grief and a fear moment and a humbling.

SHEILA: I can't imagine.

SCARLET: Oh, my goodness! God exposing pride that I didn't think I had where I was like, I'm just going to love her. It's going to be great. And you know, I'm so thankful. He's done so much healing in her.

Of course, she still has hard things, but she has prosthetic ears covered in her own skin. She has a hearing aid, she's fluent in sign language. She can say words now that people can understand. She's super smart, so funny, so resilient, and so joyful. And she's nine now, and like, she's just amazing.

SHEILA: I have to tell you, Scarlet, I really love this book. There is just so much in it because in every single place where you talk about being the worst this, the worst that, the light of Christ shines through, and your love for Jesus shines through. I just want to say, what would you say to our viewers is the most important lesson that you have learned in all the this?

SCARLET: Thank you for saying that. Um, that was my hope and the thing I hope is that people will not run away from God and His Word like I used to because you know, I think you can go one of two ways. You can either put your face in your phone these days and distract yourself from the pain of the world and just what am I going to eat tomorrow? And just spend your whole life not experiencing the thing we were all made to do to worship and have joy and peace today right now. You can either do that or you can be confronted with your -- I'm going to give three things, or you can be confronted with your sin and be like, oh, my goodness! I'm the worst person in the world! I lived there for a while and it keeps you from pursuing God because you're like, oh, I don't want to read the Bible. I don't want to feel guilty. And then you're -- you may know Jesus but you're not joyful, you're not peaceful because you're not pressing in.

And then there is the third way, which I have to discipline myself still to do which is to discipline myself to look at God's Word, to communicate with him there, to obey it, to do what it says. I used to think of God as like this angry father who was never happy with me.

And then I have this example of my hero, my adoptive dad who I didn't even realize at the time but when I was a teenager, I'd sit up on the kitchen counter and talk about boys and cheerleading and all this stuff and he would just listen and be so loving. And then I'd

want to go on a date, and he would give me a father speech and be like, "Scarlet, all sin leads to heartache. All sin leads to heartache." He would say it so many times, "All sin leads to heartache." And we'd make fun -- me and my sister would make fun of him.

And I didn't even really see what he was doing then. I was like okay, he doesn't want me to do things with boys or drink or do all the bad teenager stuff. But now I see that he was being a loving dad saying, "I don't want you to have heartache. I don't want you to hurt. Stay away from envy and lying and putting anything above Jesus. You know? Because I love you and I don't want you to hurt."

But realizing, actually studying His Word and obeying it and realizing, oh, there is joy in the obedience, and in the saying, "Here I am, send me." Yeah, that's what I hope readers get. I hope that they see their sin but then move past it to a lifestyle of repentance and worship.

SHEILA: Yeah! There is a lot of the joy in this book -- there is a lot of laughter. But we all are committed here at *LIFE* not to turn away from those who are in need. When God has awakened you to the need of the world, there is a joyful response. So I want you to watch something and then I'm going to tell you how you and I can be an answer to some prayers today. Watch this.

On the mission field

Announcer: Desolation. Desperation. Death. These are the constant companions of countless mothers throughout the nation of Zambia. Mothers like Hilda.

Open Captions

>> *My name is Hilda Ngoma. I am a widow. My husband died this past year. I had seven children, but now I have six. One child died. His name was Emanuel.*

Announcer: Like so many mothers in her region, Hilda returns each day to her child's killer, contaminated water drawn from a hand-dug well.

Open Captions

>> I know other families that have suffered the loss of children. This always reminds me of my child.

Announcer: Despite the horrific knowledge that had claimed the life of her son, Hilda has no choice but to continue giving this deadly water to her remaining children.

Open Captions

>> I'm afraid that my other children will die. I have one boy who is sick now.

Announcer: Though her situation is dire, Hilda's fears do not have to be realized. There is a solution. We can mend the broken hearts of these mothers and provide the cure for their suffering.

Open Captions

>> I would be so grateful for our village to have clean water. Everyone who drinks this dirty water gets sick. Clean water would change the lives of everyone here.

End of video

In the studio

SHEILA: I remember Hilda. I remember her so well. I remember looking into her eyes and seeing the pain of having to bury one child, and then to watch your son lying there and you know that the very same thing is going to happen to him. I can't imagine as a mom thinking that my only choice is to give my child water that has already taken the life of another child.

This is our last week of our Water for LIFE campaign. I guess because our Zambia trip wasn't that far back for me, it is all so fresh. The other mother that you saw in there with tears pouring down her face, her name was Merci. Honestly, that was what they're looking for. They're looking for someone who would be moved by the mercy of God to do something about their situation.

And the thing I saw so clearly on that trip was the before and the after -- the impossible and the possible -- to drill a well in one of those nations. We've made a commitment this year to drill 350 new wells in over 20 nations. That costs, if you were to do, say, I want to do a whole well, that's \$4800. Some of you can do that. Some of you have and thank you so much. But there is an entry point for each one of us. Do you know that \$48 will give ten people clean water for the rest of their lives? \$48 nowadays just goes. You can't even fill up your car with gas for that amount. That will give ten people life-giving water for the rest of their lives. \$144 will do that for 30 people.

So if you're able to do a whole well, thank you. This is our last week! But we could all do something. You know I don't even think about what it is like to be able to turn on the faucet and get a glass of water. I would never think of giving my son water like that. But can you imagine what it is like as a mom in these countries to wake up and there is no choice? No matter what you do. So many of the moms that I've met, get on their knees and they pray, and they say, God, can you hear our prayers? And will you send help?

And that's why James and Betty, all of us here at LIFE have said yes! It is not just our obligation, it is our joy and our privilege to be able to stand with you and provide clean water so that you don't have to bury one more child. I'm sure you've been moved by Scarlet's book. There is so much in here that we didn't get a chance to get to. So when you call and make a gift you can say, I would like Scarlet's book. And for any gift at all, we would be honored to send that to you. But this is our last week. Let's all do everything we can and change this world, 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."

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

End of video**In the studio**

SHEILA: Thank you so much. This is just our last few days. Please, please call. And you can request Scarlet's book. Now, if people want to get in touch with you, and get to know

more about you, how would they do that?

SCARLET: The easiest way is probably going to my website:

YoureTheWorstPersonInTheWorld.com. But you have to spell it right with the R-E, but not right because you can't put an apostrophe on the word "you're." ScarletHiltibidal.com will get you there too but good luck on spelling my last name. Um --

SHEILA: You're an absolute joy. Thank you for writing this book, and thanks for being with us.

SCARLET: Thank you.

SHEILA: And tell your mom-in-law I send my love.

SCARLET: I will!

SHEILA: And we'll see you next time on *Life Today*!