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Week 35: Christmas Shoes and Smiles

Sheila Walsh

Joyce Meyer #1

SHEILA: Welcome to *LIFE Today*! I'm Sheila Walsh, and I have a real treat for you today. I have a guest who has impacted the lives of literally millions around the world. I know you've read many of her books; you've listened to her teaching. But this new book sounds to me like a word that we all need right now. The book is called *Authentically, Uniquely You*: "Living free from comparison and the need to please."

Would you please help me welcome Joyce Meyer? I'm so grateful that you're here.

JOYCE: Thank you, Sheila. I appreciate you having me.

SHEILA: This seems to me like such a timely word. Why do you think that you wrote this message at this time?

JOYCE: I feel that people are under such pressure, especially today. We don't have a lot of authentic people in the world today. It just seems like more and more, there is more phoniness. And people don't really know who they are. They're trying to be this and trying to be that and comparing themselves with this and that and somebody else.

I had such problems with that when I was younger because of being abused growing up. I didn't know that I could be liked for myself or for who I was, so I was constantly trying to be somebody else. Pretty much everybody you get around has a different expectation of you. So if you try to meet everybody's expectations, pretty soon you lose yourself, and you don't know who you are.

I felt like God wanted me to write a book, or I wanted to write a book on just telling people to be real, to be authentic, and to have the courage to be who they are and to realize that we are all, we're so unique -- every single one of us is so unique.

I tried for years to be like my husband because he is real laid back and easy-going, and nothing upsets him. And then I tried to be like my pastor's wife. She was just this little, petite blond and so sweet. She was very submissive to her husband. I was like a steamroller coming into a room. I tried to be like my neighbor next door, and she was Miss Arts and Crafts and grew her own tomatoes and canned and sewed. I just wanted to cast out devils. [Laughing]

I want people to know that they need to be free to be who they are. And to also, not try to be one person for your church friends and then compromise, which I think we have so much of today -- so many people. It frightens me that so many Christians are starting to compromise their moral values. And we have to stand firm and stand fast. Yes, by all means, we want to love everybody; Jesus loved everybody, but He still told everybody the truth. He always spoke the truth. This people-pleasing thing...

SHEILA: It's exhausting.

JOYCE: It's just a nightmare. You end up -- I made myself sick on three different occasions; I mean really, really sick just from trying to make sure that I did what everybody wanted me to do and that everybody would like me. The last time I made myself sick, I made myself really sick. I wrote a book not too long ago that shares a lot of those things. You have to be who you are and take care of yourself and learn to almost -- everybody you talk to would say they're stressed out. But a lot of it we do to ourselves. It is this internal thing of not knowing how to relax and be who we are.

SHEILA: You talk in chapter one about the importance of loving yourself. Why is that so hard for people?

JOYCE: First of all, I think Christians think that that would be wrong.

SHEILA: It doesn't sound godly, yeah.

JOYCE: Or like, I've been teaching some messages about taking care of yourself. I think we're taught so much as Christians to sacrifice, and we should, but you still, if you don't take care of yourself, you get to the point where you have nothing to give to anybody else. You're just burnt out and bitter and feel like everybody uses you. I tried for years when I first got into a serious relationship with God. I always say that because I was a Christian a long time before I became a serious Christian. I think that's important for people to hear.

SHEILA: Yep! That is important.

JOYCE: I went to church. I read a chapter a day in my Bible. I said a little prayer at night before I went to bed. But I wasn't acting like a Christian. I wasn't. I wasn't open to letting God change my life. I thought everybody else needed to change so I could be happy. So in 1976, God touched my life and gave me a hunger for the Word. When I really started studying the Word, I started realizing it wasn't everybody else that had a problem, I had problems.

So I started hearing a lot about loving people. I wanted so much to be obedient to God and to love people. Or say like maybe not to judge people; I was really judgmental and critical. And I just couldn't seem to do it. The more I tried, the more I failed. God finally showed me. He said, "You can't give away what you don't have."

I wasn't receiving God's love. And really loving yourself is -- you have to love yourself because of who you are in Christ, not because you do everything right or you don't make mistakes. So people think that loving themselves is wrong because they make mistakes, and they do things wrong. But nobody watching today is a surprise to God. He is not

surprised when we do stupid things. He knew everything that we would ever do before we ever did it. And so, I had to spend a whole year learning how to believe that God loved me. That still is probably one of the most important messages that we can tell people.

At the first public meeting that I did, they asked me to teach a women's group at my church, and 110 ladies showed up. I asked God what He wanted me to teach, and He said, "Tell them that I love them." I thought I don't want to teach some little Sunday School lesson. Everybody knows you love them. And what He put in my heart is no, if they did, they'd act a lot different than what they do.

And so you see, if we really knew that God loved us, really knew that, and believed that, you get rid of insecurity, you get rid of fear. You don't feel the need to compare yourself with other people or please people all the time. There is a scripture in First Peter 3:11 that says that we should be at peace with God, with ourselves, and with our fellow man. Well, I think it has to come like that. First, you have to have peace with God, and that comes through being authentic and genuine with God and confessing your sins; just being honest with God about how you feel and who you are. I love the Psalms because David is so honest with God about how he feels. Yet, he also recognized his sins, and he repented of his sins.

So when you can have a good relationship with God, a good authentic, honest relationship with God where you're not -- like sometimes I have to laugh because some people, it's like you know them this way, but when they start to pray -- [Laughing]

SHEILA: I know exactly what you're going to say.

JOYCE: If they're praying in front of people, it's like all of the sudden they become this whole different...

SHEILA: The Archbishop of Canterbury shows up.

JOYCE: It's like my gosh! But when you can be real and authentic with God and have a reverential fear of God, but also, just a good, friendly, comfortable relationship with God.

SHEILA: I love that phrase! You use that in the book.

JOYCE: It took me so long to get comfortable with God. I always felt like I had to put on airs for Him too. Be really religious and do everything just right. Do you know how nice it is to come home at night after a hard day's work and put on your pajamas and get in your comfy chair? I want to be comfortable like that with God. Not in a disrespectful way but have a comfortable friendship with Him. So when you can be at peace with God, then you can be at peace with yourself.

I remember I had a girl on my show one day, and she said something about she finally learned how to be at peace with her thighs.

[Laughter]

SHEILA: Do you have her phone number?

JOYCE: There are so many things; like for a long time, I didn't like my voice because my voice is deep. It's not like sweet and nice like most women. But, here, I didn't know that God gave me my voice for the purpose He gave it to me. And my voice is strong, and it commands attention. Probably, if I had a real sweet, meek voice, men would have a hard time wanting to listen to me.

And so you have peace with God, you have peace with yourself, and then you can finally learn how to be at peace with other people. I think, though I'm writing a book now that will come out, not for another year from this fall, it's about just loving people that are hard to love. The one thing that God has called us to do is to love one another. In order to do that, we have to learn to accept people the way they are. But that doesn't mean you

have to accept sin. I think that's a place where the church is a little mixed up today. Everybody wants to be gracious, and they want to be loving, but you've got to look back at the way Paul dealt with sin in the church. He did it for the benefit of a person that was sinning but wasn't ready to change.

So you're going to get -- I'll just say this, you're going to get in absolutely no place in your walk with God until you learn how to love yourself.

SHEILA: That's a huge statement! Because I think of the church, the body of Christ, we should be the most transparent people on the planet, but I often think the people who are in trouble are not drawn to us because we seem so fake.

JOYCE: So fake and so phony, and they hear us say one thing but see us do another. You have to learn the minute that somebody knows you're a Christian, they're watching you. And they're looking for something authentic. People in the world are so hungry for something real and something that they can believe in. And it's so important the way we behave and the way we act in public, in private.

When I first got on television, I began to realize that people recognized me everywhere I went. Well, Dave and I no longer could afford to get out in a shopping mall and have an argument about something. You can't. If you're going to put your face on TV, you better be ready to live what you're preaching because people are going to see it. That's what God wants. He wants authentic people, not people that are one way with their Christian friends and then goes to work, and they're another way with their non-believing Christian friends.

SHEILA: I wrote this down, this statement in your book because I really, "Once you understand the difference between who you are in Christ and who you are in yourself, you no longer struggle to try to earn to deserve what is already yours as a gift from God." That's huge! Would you unpack what you mean by that?

JOYCE: Okay, let's just use righteousness as an example. Second Corinthians 5:21 says, "He that knew no sin became sin that we might be made the righteousness of God in Christ." So God gives us a righteousness, His own righteousness as a gift that's not based on us doing everything right but first, He makes us right, and then out of that, we start having a desire to do what's right. We have it backward. We try to do what's right so we can be right with God.

SHEILA: Wow! That's a huge distinction!

JOYCE: But he says, He makes us right with God through our faith in Christ. So we have a right relationship with God. "While you were still yet in sin, God loved you and sent Jesus to die for you." John 14:6 says, "If you love me, you'll obey me." It doesn't say if you obey me, I'll love you.

SHEILA: Important distinction!

JOYCE: He gives us all these things first, and then our relationship with him should be out of responding to my gosh, how good God is and what he's done for me! And so, I want to obey him, and I want to do what's right. And here again, and to me it is such an important thing for people to realize, you cannot give away what you don't have. So how can I behave right if I don't have righteousness in me? So God gives us the fruit of the Spirit, He makes us right, He fills us full of His love. And when I tell people to love themselves, I'm not saying "be in love with yourself." I'm not in love with myself; I know full well what I am. But I do love myself because if you don't love yourself, you're not receiving God's love.

So the Lord told me one time, he said, "You're like somebody who keeps trying to get in a chair you're already sitting in." I do this thing where I get in a chair and try really hard to get in it, and I'm already in it. So many people are trying to earn God's love, but they already have God's love.

SHEILA: That's a great illustration!

JOYCE: And so, it's like struggling to try to get something that you already have. And if you can by faith know who you are in Christ -- you know we're not human doings, we're human beings. We all -- like we did a survey at our office one time and said, "If you could ask God one question, what would you like to ask Him?" Do you know what the number one answer was? "When will I know when I'm doing enough?"

SHEILA: Oh my gosh! Wow!

JOYCE: And how many people? That was my problem for so long. I couldn't even really sit down at night and enjoy watching a movie because I always felt like I should be working. I felt like I was worth more if I was working. Of course, I was raised by a father who -- I remember getting in trouble for laughing and playing. And so I had a really hard time enjoying life.

And then I found John 10:10 in the Amplified Bible. It says, "The thief comes to steal, kill, and destroy but Jesus said, 'I came that you might have and enjoy your life.'" I thought I don't enjoy my life. I was in ministry, and I wasn't enjoying that. Because I'd get up on the platform, and I was too concerned about what everybody thought. And do I have the right message? Am I saying the right thing? And do I look the right way? It's like, you can't enjoy life when you're like that because you're so self-focused on yourself.

So I talk a lot about knowing the difference in your who and your do. I know who I am in Christ, and I also know that I don't do everything right. As a matter of fact, I do a lot of things wrong, but I also know my heart. Man, if I could, I would get up every day and do everything perfectly because I love the Lord so much. And that's what He wants. Number one, most important commandment, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and all your strength." You'll get me preaching about 25 different things here. [Laughing]

SHEILA: One thing that is going to become abundantly clear is you want this book. I've read a lot of Joyce's books, but this book touched me personally. I'm going to tell you how you can get your own copy. But as you know, here at *LIFE*, we care very much about moms and children around the world who are struggling. I want to ask you to help us. When you do that, we'll get this in the mail to you. So would you please watch this?

On the mission field

Announcer: Sharing God's love is both our privilege and responsibility at *LIFE Outreach*. Those of you who make the decision to support our mission work have empowered us to put words into action. In areas where precious children have already perished, many lives are now being saved because you chose to do something about crisis situations like contaminated water sources and a lack of food.

With all that's been done this year, at Christmastime we like to go even further by providing corrective surgeries for children with cleft palates. And there's something else that brings a smile to children's faces.

Sheila: You've helped us change the lives of children all around the world but we thought in this season, wouldn't it be cool to do something really special? If you look at this darling little one here in Angola, he is like every other little boy or girl I've seen. He has no shoes.

Announcer: This coming Christmas, we want to give children all over the world a pair of their very own shoes.

Sheila: Look at this face! Don't you just think it's the most beautiful thing in the world to be able not to just put shoes on her feet but to be able to protect her from diseases, from all sorts of things as she steps on the ground? It's just -- we want to keep these big brown eyes as big and brown as possible.

Announcer: Help us make this Christmas one these children will never forget by giving them a gift that protects their very lives. Help us provide Christmas Shoes & Smiles.

Sheila: Thank you so much! Thank you for putting shoes on the feet of such a beautiful little girl. Thank you!

End of video

In the studio

SHEILA: I remember that little one so clearly. You might think, well, why are you talking about Christmas now? Well, we're talking about Christmas now because we want to get 150,000 pairs of shoes out to all the different places where we work before Christmas comes. So that's why we have to start early and gather everything in.

You wouldn't believe that something like this that we manage to get manufactured for \$3.60 could literally save the life of a child. Because they don't wear any shoes, their feet get cut, they're in the water where there are all sorts of diseases. So it can cost a child their life.

So don't you think this Christmas it would be great if instead of just looking at what we want or what our kids want, we determine to look outside? And we can be the hands and feet of Jesus. So for \$36, what can you do with 36 bucks these days? You can send shoes to ten children. If you do a little bit more, \$72 will send shoes for 20 children. \$180 will send shoes for 50 children.

And the other thing we do is Operation Shoes and Smiles. When children are born in certain countries where they have cleft lip or cleft palate, there's so much superstition around that where it's looked on as they're cursed by God, and they're not included in school, and they're not included in life.

I've been in surgery with some of the doctors that we work with on the ground and watched the difference they make when you see a smile on a child who has never been able to smile; when you see a child being able to enjoy a meal which they've not been able to do before. So these amazing surgeons that we've just fallen in love with, they'll do each surgery for \$500.

So if you are able to give \$1,000, that will give two children a life-saving surgery. Or you can say, you know what? I'd rather it go to shoes, and that would give 275 children a pair of shoes. I often think at Christmas, we lose the whole plot. We forget that it was about the greatest gift given, and we run our credit cards up, and we drive ourselves nuts going around the mall.

Wouldn't it be great to make this a family project this year? Maybe sit down and talk with your kids and say, what do you want to do? And we all give up a little bit. I promise you when you sit around your table on Christmas day, and you know that somewhere across the world, there is a child that got their very first pair of shoes, that turkey is going to taste way, way better!

So please, would you go to your phone? Would you call that number on the screen? Would you just make the best gift you can? And remember, for any gift at all, please request Joyce's new book, *Authentically, Uniquely You*. Because if you do what you can do, and I do what we can do, we can change the world one child at a time.

Begin video clip

ANNOUNCER: Poverty is a killer and because of it, children needlessly suffer, not only from a lack of food and clean water but also from a lack of things we often take for granted like a simple pair of shoes. Far too many children living in extreme poverty have never owned a new pair of shoes. And while that may seem minor in light of all their needs, walking with bare feet puts them at risk of life-threatening infections and diseases

that could lead to crippling consequences -- and even death.

By responding today, you will help secure and make ready 150,000 pairs of Christmas shoes to be shipped and delivered to children around the world just in time for the holidays. Your gift of \$36 will help provide ten pairs of shoes. A gift of \$72 will help provide 20 pairs. And a gift of \$180 will help provide 50 pairs of Christmas shoes for children in need.

As a thank you for your gift of support, be sure to request this beautiful crafted red crystal shoe ornament, a treasure to display each Christmas. With your gift of \$100 or more, you may request this keepsake boxed set featuring four of *LIFE's* crystal Christmas shoe ornaments.

Finally, please consider a gift of \$1,000 or more, to help provide over 275 pairs of shoes, or two children with corrective cleft lip or palate surgeries. And you may request a beautiful bronze sculpture, "Let the Children Come!" Please call, write, or make your gift online today.

End of video

In the studio

SHEILA: Thank you so much! I really appreciate it. If the lines are busy, keep calling and we'll get through. Joyce, I know that's so much a part of your heart too. You and your ministry are impacting the lives of millions of people overseas.

JOYCE: I don't even know how I knew this, but from the very, very beginning of our ministry, when I had a home Bible study in my home, I formed a group of ladies, and we called them "Maidens of Mercy." Their job was to just help people that we knew needed help. I really believe that -- I don't even know that we're doing church the way church should be done if we're just getting together once a week and just trying to build

ourselves up and get our church to grow. We have to reach out to people that are hurting. Jesus says over and over, we are not to forget the poor. I think it is so interesting when Paul finally met with the apostles. He said the only instruction they had from him was to make sure he didn't forget the poor.

We have to, things like you're talking about, that's God's heart. Putting shoes on those kids and putting smiles on faces, we do that same kind of work, and we should be doing it. That's what the Bible says we should be doing.

SHEILA: So remember when you call, ask for Joyce's new book, *Authentically, Uniquely You*. It's a phenomenal book. Joyce, thank you so much for being with us.

JOYCE: Thank you for having me.

SHEILA: We'll see you next time on *LIFE Today*!