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Week 36: Christmas Shoes and Smiles

Randy Robison and Sheila Walsh

Kathy Lee Gifford

SHEILA: Hello! Welcome to *LIFE Today*. I'm here with Randy Robison. And you're going to be very happy because today we have one of your all-time favorite guests here in the studio with us. You love her. Every time we have her on, we get so many of you writing in or calling saying, "Please have her back!" So we listened and here she is, Kathie Lee Gifford.

KATHIE: I came begging! [Laughing]

SHEILA: Oh, no!

KATHIE: For my friends, Sheila. So nice to see you, Randy.

RANDY: Great to have you. We're excited about the new project.

KATHIE: Four years in the making.

SHEILA: Wow! Take us back a little bit because you started with *The God Who Sees* which was profoundly moving.

KATHIE: Thank you. You loved it and it meant a lot to me. When I hear from you about something I feel like you're almost saying, "Well done, my good and faithful servant." It means that much to me.

So yeah, the reaction to *The God Who Sees* was so massive. It was the first time I'd ever

directed anything and got bitten by the bug to take whatever I'd created, along with, of course, Nicole C. Mullen, and then just keep my baby with me and present it to the world. I just had grown tired of giving it up, my vision up to somebody else because it never really works out. You always say, aah! I would have done that differently. No one to blame now.

But that one turned out so well in terms of the reaction we got from it. I don't want to take a lot of time to tell you how it happened but a young woman who is 28, gorgeous, very, very secular at the Today Show watched it, sobbed her eyes out, and she said, "Can you make it longer? I've never heard these stories before. Tell me more stories!" I said, "You just showed me what the Lord's will is for me for the rest of my life." To take these epic stories that people in the world think, first of all never happened, second of all if they did, they have no relevance for today, in our world today.

They could not be more wrong. These stories are ripped from the headlines today. People who don't read the Bible have no idea what's in it. If you want the real housewives of the Old Testament, you'll get it. Everything is there. And God did not whitewash his people's stories.

So my challenge was to write some more. So I wrote with different composer friends of mine and we go from the dawn of time, the dawn of creation basically, all the way through the Old Testament, New Testament to the story when Jesus said to his disciples, "Get in the boat and meet me on the other side." What I love about that particular one is that we as westerners, Sheila, you know I've had this passion about Christians, western Christians especially, learning more about their Jewish heritage, learning more about where we came from, what we're grafted into. All -- Jesus was a Jew. People still say to me, "Jesus was Catholic, right?" I want to go -- Jesus, help me! They just don't understand that we are one story -- one story of God calling a man from modern-day Iraq, named Abram at the time, to become the father of a nation. And he's got one little problem, his wife is gorgeous, but she is barren. How is she going to become the mother of the nation?

So I knew I had to tell the story of how God called a nation to be so that out of the nation the Messiah could emerge because by that time the world was desperate for a Savior just like we are today too. But meet me on the other side to Christians in America means oh I'll see ya -- I'll get there sometime on the other side of the Sea of Galilee. No! The other side was a place called the Decapolis, ten cities full of the worst pagans that had escaped from the conquering of the Promised Land.

So he was saying what he is saying to us today if you think you're going to follow me you better buckle up because I'm going to take you everywhere -- you're out of your comfort zone. I'm going to take you where you've been told your whole life it's not good to go there. You're not going to be clean. You're going to get dirty. You're going to be this, you're going to be out of fellowship. And that's what Jesus is calling us to do.

SHEILA: That is a huge message for right --

KATHIE: For right now.

SHEILA: Because we all think there are places we belong, and there are places we don't belong. They're not like us. That's the very reason we should go there.

KATHIE: Because Jesus said it to his disciples. And they knew it was going to be awful because Jews by nature hate water. Bad things happen on water -- Jonah, the Red Sea, all kinds of stuff. So they even fished about a hundred yards offshore. They wouldn't get in a boat and go all the way across. And Jesus said, do that. Do that. And what's the first thing that happens? The storm! And then Peter almost drowns because he's trying to walk to Jesus. Good for him. But he also takes his eyes off him which happens to all of us. Bad! Sink -- maybe die!

Next, they finally get to land and who greets them? This crazy naked guy who cuts himself and wants to cut you up too. So if you can just imagine, it is funny to me that only Jesus got out of the boat.

SHEILA: I know, that's a three Advil moment for anybody. [Laughing]

KATHIE: But what happened? He saw him. And we show that in the movie that he saw him. He looked right at him. And by the authority that he had as God and the creator of all things including this man, he loved him. He loved him! The next thing you know he is sitting quietly and he wants to get in the boat with Jesus and the disciples but Jesus says, "No. You go back to your village. You tell everyone you meet what your God has done for you this day."

RANDY: A beautiful story! Now, I want to go back really quick though because you talk about crossing over boundaries. We live in a society that's just throwing up boundaries left and right. You're not this so you can't talk about this. You shouldn't be around these people.

KATHIE: That's right! I'm going to cancel you.

RANDY: But you've spent your whole life crossing over those boundaries. This is what God, in a lot of ways, called you to do.

KATHIE: Totally called me to do it, and I got so much flack and almost all of it was from Christians when I first started in the business, like all those years ago. You can't do that you're a Christian. I said, "I'm a follower of Jesus and he's telling me that's where I'm supposed to go." Well, it is this, it is Sodom and Gomorrah! I said, "Yes! And God went there and saved whoever he could save." I never set out to be like -- I just knew that was my mission field.

And as a result, ironically, millions of people heard the Word of God because I was on television proclaiming it. And I didn't care if I was on N.B.C. A.B.C. a show with you where it is natural to do it, but anytime I had an opportunity boom, and what are they going to do, fire me? They never did. Because the ratings started going through the roof.

SHEILA: What's fascinating to me is so many of the people that we think of as being kind of outrageous and way out there love you.

KATHIE: It is crazy, isn't it?

SHEILA: No, it's significant.

KATHIE: You know what? I think that they just sense that I'm real and I think the word world is full of inauthentic people. And we see too many of those people be rewarded. They've seen me go through a lot of garbage in my life and they've watched to see how I dealt with it. And each time I knew, okay, this has been awful, and I wish I was anywhere but here right now. But I know God is going to use this because people are going to tune in and go, what's she going to do now? And they saw God's faithfulness in my life. Not mine to him --

SHEILA: You've stewarded your suffering well.

KATHIE: Oh, I wanted it to count. God, all things work together for good. And he will take my ashes and bring beauty forth from them if I let him -- if I trust him to. And that's the hard part of the walk is the trusting -- the trust. Even in this, Lord? And he goes even in this.

SHEILA: Want to see a trailer?

RANDY: Yeah, I do.

SHEILA: A brand-new movie coming out called *The Way*. It's going to be released this week. But we have a special treat for you. Watch this trailer for *The Way*.

Begin video clip

[music]

KATHIE: The Bible comes to life with music and narration in ways you've never experienced before.

The Way!

End of video**In the studio**

SHEILA: Wow!

KATHIE: Makes me cry. We just finished editing that at my house in Tennessee. Just Saturday night, and here we are. We're getting it out as fast as we can because we want people to -- if you're a believer, thank you for coming and I hope it blesses you. But this is a real opportunity to bring your friends who do not know that God loves them. That's just the whole point of it all.

Years ago, Billy Graham said to me, "Kathie, don't do the mistake I made which is talk about politics. I haven't done it very many times but the two times or whatever it was, I've regretted it." He said, "Just keep telling people God loves you." That message the whole world needs to hear. You'll get that and your friends will too. I'm believing that millions of lives will be touched with this the same way they were with *The God Who Sees*. And there is a companion book to it as well called *The God of the Way*, which I wrote with my dear friend, Rabbi Jason Sobel.

So this is four years in the making. It's a story of God's faithfulness, Sheila and Randy, just like everything is. I got very, very little support financially. I paid for it myself out of all the books that you guys have been so wonderful to buy. I had all that money in my kingdom account, I call it but I needed more. So I went to my friends, I've got to give a shout out to my friends at Gateway Church in Dallas, who just came through for me and

just believed in it. People don't trust that spending money in the arts is money well spent.

But would you say that now *After the Passion of the Christ* came out? No. Mel proved that no, these are stories we have to tell. But we've told them badly. We've told them in embarrassing ways because first of all, we didn't have the skills. You don't go to study cinema. I remember when Billy Graham put out his first movie, *The Restless Ones* in I think 1964, something like that, I forget what year it was. I mean he was roundly criticized for it because Christians don't go to movies. He says, "Well, Christians watch television, and they watch me preach; they come to know Jesus." Satan doesn't own the movie theaters, the airwaves, let's take them back.

I was a little 12-year-old Jewish girl sitting in that movie theater in Annapolis, Maryland. That night I saw that movie and I went forward and asked Yeshua into my heart because I could hear him saying to me, Kathie, I love you! And if you'll trust me, I will make something beautiful out of your life.

That's what he wants to do for everybody. That's why you guys get up every day and come here and do your work. It's to keep his message, the good news, which is the word *gospel*, means good news, that God loves us.

SHEILA: Why is it so important to you, Kathie Lee to be a student of the original language of the Word of God?

KATHIE: Because it is everything, Sheila, and you know that. I can't stand all the bad translations of the Bible. If it's not the Greek in the New Testament, its original source or it is not Hebrew in the Old, you are reading a bad translation of the Bible. And there are many more bad ones than good. There are some wonderful ones. The Tree of Life, which is written by all rabbis; you have Messianic rabbis and they know their stuff. I love the new one, The Spirit-filled Life Bible. The Passion is beautiful! And there are others, of course, but they got sloppy in the translations. Jesus was not a carpenter. He was a stone mason. And so if we get something that simple wrong, what else are we getting wrong?

That's why I like to study rabbinically. You don't just learn the real meaning of the words, you learn what everything meant geopolitically and culturally in the time of Jesus. And it is so fascinating!

RANDY: Context is important, and we don't --

KATHIE: There is so much, and there are layers and layers and layers. And that's why I love the rabbis so much. They always go, "But there is more! There is so much more!" We've got to study the real Word of God in order to memorize the real Word of God, in order to get it deep in our D.N.A. deeper than our bone and marrow so that it's there. We don't have to go looking it up, it is there! When the trials and tribulations and storms of life, we're not going to go looking for a concordance. They're great but you need them, and you've got to come against the devil in just the way Jesus did in the Judean wilderness. He just answered every temptation with the Word, "It is written." And he's our model for everything.

SHEILA: You know what I took from the movie and from your new book, *The God of the Way*? It helped me get a greater understanding of God's timing. That's huge!

KATHIE: The thing we rant and rave about.

SHEILA: Because so often we think, Lord, where are you? Why are you not moving? But when you begin to understand the ways of God and God's timing, it gives you strength to keep pressing on.

KATHIE: And like all the other characters in the Bible, you say to yourself, I'm not alone. This person went through this. I was stranded in the desert by a man who abused me. I've been stranded in my desert right now by someone who has been abusing me. And we're not alone. There are wonderful churches. You all are blessed to live in an area of the world where there are many wonderful churches to choose from. There is no excuse here. There are lots of excuses in other places in this country; it is hard to find a

place. But everything is online now. There is no excuse really. If you seek, you will find.

SHEILA: I think these are days to get ready because I think the world is getting -- we see it getting darker and darker. And I think that's when the calling for our light to shine brighter and to get so plugged into the Lord that he is the air we breathe.

KATHIE: Well, one of the things you'll see in the movie is when the Gateway Church kids are actually up on top of a building right here in Fort Worth at the Capernaum village. Sweet, sweet kids that go: The path of the righteous is like the first gleam of dawn, shining ever brighter until the full light of day. Nothing is going to put us out. Nobody is going to snuff us out. Even said I will not ever do that. And the world will try to, it will do its best. And you're right, the stronger we are with our witness, the more we will be attacked until we get to the point, I see you. Get out of town, Satan. I know what you're doing. You've tried. No. Uh-uh, I come against you in the name of Jesus. And he has to flee.

RANDY: I have an observation about you and your work.

KATHIE: I was young, I needed the money! [Laughing]

RANDY: In your more recent work --

KATHIE: You saw that?

RANDY: More recent work. No, seriously. Here's what I see, you're a storyteller. And the Bible is a storytelling book. Jesus told us stories. I think there is something so fundamental in all of us that relates to stories, and we learn from stories. And it's a lot easier to tell your story, honestly, than to maybe defend a topic or win an argument or debate.

KATHIE: Just tell your story.

RANDY: Yeah! How do you do that so naturally and easily?

KATHIE: You know, was it Saint Augustine that said, "Preach the gospel at all times, but when necessary, use words." I think we get it butt backwards. I'm sorry but I'm in Texas now so I can say butt backwards, I think. And we talk about it too much and we're not living it, and the world sees that, and they see the hypocrisy. I was on my movie set, *Then Came You* with my friend Craig Ferguson, one of my favorite people, along with you from the great, you know where. I'm out of practice. He said to me one day, and he's my favorite Agnostic in the whole world. Ricky Gervais is my favorite atheist. I just love these guys. He said, "Kathie, why do you love me and Ricky so much? We're not good guys. We don't believe as you believe. We don't vote the way you do." They don't know how I vote; they're just assuming. "We don't believe any of this stuff you believe. In fact, we think you're crazy! But why do you love us?"

SHEILA: What a question.

KATHIE: I said, "I love you because first of all, God loves you. You're created in his image whether you believe in him or not. He believes in you, and he loves you. So I'm going to love the people that God loves." I said, "And you're funny, you make me laugh, and I absolutely adore you." He looked at me and said one of the saddest things I've ever heard. He goes, "I've got to tell you, no person of faith has ever told me or Ricky that they love us." I said, "Then you've never met a real one."

SHEILA: That's the lesson for this show, people. I want to ask you just personally for a favor. I want you to go see this movie and I want you to bring your friends, invite your neighbors. Let's just -- let's flood the theaters to see this movie and see what God will do.

But before that, I want you to watch something. We are very committed to little kids who are born in the world with cleft palate and cleft lip. Devastating! You and I have the unique divine privilege of changing their lives. Would you watch this?

On the mission field

ANNOUNCER: Every year in developing countries around the world, more than 170,000 children are born with a cleft lip or cleft palate. Without surgical repair, a cleft lip or palate could be deadly for a child.

DR. HODGES: As a child grows with a cleft palate, they will not be able to breastfeed and that can cause real problems for nutrition. And it can also cause them to have more commonly, chest infections, and that could even lead to death.

ANNOUNCER: Beyond just the physical dangers, the cleft lip or palate can cause lasting emotional and psychological damage to a child.

DR. HODGES: Then, as they start to talk, they will not be able to be understood. Cleft palate makes their speech very, very difficult to understand. And so combining the appearance and also the speech will have a huge impact on how that child feels about themselves as they grow up.

ANNOUNCER: Fortunately, a cleft lip or a cleft palate can be repaired fairly easily with corrective surgery. But a child living in poverty has very little hope and even fewer options for this type of surgery.

That's why *LIFE Outreach* and its partners have already provided more than 2,000 life-changing surgeries at no cost to the families. And this year, we will continue to do as many surgical cleft repairs as possible around the world.

DR. HODGES: Thanks to partners like *LIFE Outreach International*, we're able to make lasting changes in children's lives through corrective surgery. Just to give an example from the clinic this week, I saw several children that we've operated on their lips and their

palates, very young, and the children are healthy, they look normal, and I know that they will now be able to speak normally as well.

But there is so much more work to be done. Literally, thousands of families are waiting for help, but we can only do it with your continuing support. God bless you.

End of video

In the studio

SHEILA: See the difference there?

KATHIE: The work you all do here is just incredible. I've just been home holding my first grandson for the first time ever. And I look at him the same way when I held Cody, and I held my first AIDS baby and the other -- this is 32 years ago, it is the same feeling now. My little grandson is in perfect health, born to privilege, born to nothing but health, almost guaranteed success. And Jesus said, "Suffer the little children who are suffering to come unto me. Do not forbid them, do not cast them aside."

SHEILA: Right! And that's why we're here, folks. We will never stop telling their stories. We can make such a difference with so little. Our doctors on the ground -- and I've had the privilege of going into surgery with them and they will do these surgeries, cleft lip or cleft palate for \$500! As we get close to Christmas because this is our Christmas Shoes and Smiles --

KATHIE: Oh, give that as a present!

SHEILA: What a present to give! Yeah! Absolutely! Give it as a gift. Let's make this Christmas not about what we can get, but because of the greatest gift we've been given, what we can do in Jesus' name. There is an entry point for everybody, Randy.

RANDY: Absolutely. And whether you want to start with the shoes or go for the big smiles, whatever you can do, we would just ask you to go online or go to the phone right now. Make the best gift you can. Just to give you an idea, you can provide ten pairs of shoes for children, ten children will get shoes with your gift of \$36. With your gift of \$1,000, you can provide shoes for 275 children or surgeries for two children in need.

Whatever you can do, Sheila, to me it is exciting to be able to see a problem and solve it. Go in and say, you know what? God has blessed us; now we can bless you. That's what I want people to do.

SHEILA: Do you want to know how to serve Jesus? Here you go. So please, call right now. Let's make this the best Christmas these children have ever seen. And then we've earned the right to tell them about the one who sent us. Thank you.

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

On the mission field

ISAK: The thing you need to understand is just how tough life is for the children that live in these villages. They fight malnutrition. They struggle through sickness and diseases, and I mean even just their little feet. And ultimately, hookworm can get in there, it can infect this foot. Children in some cases, in the worst cases, end up dying from that. But even if they don't die, it really makes them sick, it impacts their lives. And it is not right, it is not fair that children should be struggling like that.

Fortunately, we are here today. This is such a happy moment because we actually get to and I'm going to show you right now, you're going to join me as we're going to put a pair of shoes on this little guy. We're going to change his life right now by doing something as simple as putting a pair of shoes on his feet.

So please, I'm asking you to celebrate with us today. But do something. Dial that number on your screen or get online and give this joyful gift, give the gift of shoes.

End of video

In the studio

RANDY: I hope you're going online or going to the phone right now. Make this Christmas the best for some children. We can do it together. And today, if you will request *The God of the Way* with any gift towards *Shoes and Smiles*, we'll gladly send it to you. And I do want to mention TheWayMusic.com. That website will give you information about Kathie Lee's film.

KATHIE: Everything!

RANDY: We're excited. And Sheila, I'm just so thankful.

SHEILA: It is just always a pure joy to have you here. Go see the movie, go see the movie, go see the movie! Thank you, Kathie Lee, we love you!

KATHIE: Thank you for your prayers, everybody. I've felt them all these years. I wouldn't still be doing it, I wouldn't be breathing without them. Thank you.

SHEILA: Yeah, there is a little army behind you. We love you too. And we'll see you next time on *Life Today*. God bless!