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Week 37: Christmas Shoes and Smiles

Randy Robison and Sheila Walsh

Susie Larson #2

RANDY: Welcome to *LIFE Today*. I'm Randy Robison. Sheila Walsh is here with me.

SHEILA: Hey!

RANDY: Our guest is Susie Larson again. If you missed the first program that we had with Susie, I would invite you to go to LifeToday.org. You can watch all of our daily television programs right there on that website anytime you want, on whatever device.

SHEILA: And you don't want to miss that first show.

RANDY: That's exactly it. And Sheila, you're excited about it because it touched you deeply.

SHEILA: Oh gosh! Just because I've known and loved you, Susie, for so long. You're one of the women I admire most in the Lord. You're just faithful, strong, real, vulnerable, and transparent. And over the years here on *LIFE*, you've shared with us the trauma and the struggle and the pain. And to see you emerging into daylight, to see the clouds begin to part and the sun and the smile of God upon your life, I just want to do a happy dance but I'm clumsy, so I'll stay here.

[Laughter]

SUSIE: Thank you.

SHEILA: But you have this great new book. It's all about a fact, *Strong in Battle: Why the Humble will Prevail*. You said something really interesting in it that I was kind of challenged by.

You said that maybe some of the strategies we've used in the past for battles wouldn't necessarily work in the current battles. What do you mean by that?

SUSIE: We have not been where we are now. We are in a season of acceleration as we all can see. Things are happening so fast. I'm noticing God is repositioning saints. He's taking them out of one vocation and putting them in. It is like a chess match. Truly you're seeing that. The enemy wants nothing more than to lull us into a false sense of security.

Just to make a parallel on fitness, there is something really good about repetition because you gain momentum. But there is a point where repetition doesn't serve you anymore because you plateau and that's why you have to do cross-training. You have to kind of shock your body a little bit. In the spiritual realm, I feel like it is very similar. If you keep combatting the lies in the same old way, the enemy just watches. He's had a long time to study you. When you least expect it, he'll blindside you in another way.

So I think to have the mind of the Lord, it is kind of wax on, wax off, you know to be listening to the Spirit of God and do what he says when he says. Because we're all each in different seasons. For one obedience might be to rest, another might be to run, and another might be to take your stand and do not back down. We're all in different seasons but it requires all hands on deck, and every one of us listening to the voice of God right now.

RANDY: You also say that it is not formulaic necessarily. In other words, the way it looks for you, some basics are consistent, obedience, and hearing God's voice. Yeah. But I think it makes it hard. How do we know we're fighting the battle the right way if it's not just codified, made easy for us?

SUSIE: Well, the measure of your peace. The measure of your sense of God's presence and your awareness of God's character. The thing is, battle, what it does, it disorients us and it magnifies the problem. It makes us fear the enemy. And what I often say is what the enemy wants to do, especially if you have undealt with past fears, unresolved hurts, he will take that unresolved stuff, he will present a potential picture for the future that's your worst case scenario, and then he

tries to get you to imagine a future that God's not in. So for a believer, there is no such scenario as that but we'll take the bait if there are wounds and things that we haven't reconciled.

And what I do believe, how these last couple of years as shaking as they are, is they have brought our stuff to the surface. I do feel like part of that is the Lord bringing a cleansing and a purifying because there is a traumatized world that needs help and we can't impart what we don't possess. If we've got these unresolved things coming to the surface, the goal is not to not feel them. The goal isn't even relief, it is redemption. We want a break and God wants a breakthrough. We've got to see ourselves in the bigger story. To go, Lord, show me the stuff in my soil that's sort of unresolved, the weeds that need to go, so that I can have a clear picture of who you are and who my enemy is.

That's where you say it's not formulaic because we all are coming to this place with a different set of circumstances but we have the same God and we have these potent promises. So as we start to kind of get caught up and start to see our soul restored, we're going to see God move in ways that we never have before. I believe it.

SHEILA: I do too! One of the things that you talked about as we position ourselves for the days that we're living in, you say these are not days for autopilot, just cruising or reactive. What did you mean by that, Susie?

SUSIE: Oh, I love that question because there are these two extreme options, and neither are healthy. One is to shake your fist at the darkness and to live in reaction. I see that and you see that on social media, Christians are coming at each other, and people are pointing to us going, why would I want what you have? But the other option then is to kind of entertain yourself to death and numb out and just sort of do what you've always done. We're being boiled down to become purified, powerful followers of Christ. So these two options are not for us. We have to come into a place where we go, God is God and I'm a child of God, and I want to discern the ways the enemy is coming against me, and I'm going to be quick to deal with them.

One of the things that Melissa said from the previous show, the lawyer friend who led me

through these mercy trials. She said in the constitution it's written that the person being accused deserves a speedy trial. She said for believers how much more shall we be quick to forgive offenses and quick to bring them before a court, right, so that we can release mercy to them? If you're not fully engaged with what God is doing right now, you're missing it because he is moving.

One of the passages that have just been speaking to me is this little passage in Hebrews. It talks about when the land -- when the rain comes and the land produces a harvest and a crop then it is blessed by God. But if it doesn't it is cursed by the farmer, basically because what I've been thinking about as I've been walking through this healing process, I've been reading this 100-year-old book on healing. I don't know if you've heard of it, *Christ the Healer* by F. F. Bosworth?

SHEILA: Yes!

SUSIE: The best book I've read -- the most biblical book I would say on healing. But he said when people ask you, "Pray for my healing," what they mean to ask is, "Teach me about the power of the seed because the seed always demands a harvest." And when you start to understand that your soil, when you guard your heart, when you are quick to uproot the weeds, the attitudes and you're quick to deal with that and you plant the words of truth in your soil, whatever that promise is that is pertinent to the problems you're facing, there is a time of outpouring. The healing rains are coming and if your field is prepared, the harvest will grow and you'll receive God's blessing. But if you're still living like you used to live and still living like the rest of the world when the rain comes, you're going to have a pile of slop, right? Because it won't produce a harvest because the seed is what demands a harvest.

SHEILA: That's huge! That's huge! You always kind of come up with these things that make me think, I'm like four years old in the Lord. A really interesting thing you talk about, you talk about when somebody goes through great suffering and they say, why me, Lord? And you say often the response is why not me? But you tell us to pause on the why me, Lord? Why is that?

SUSIE: Yeah, and I'm suggesting that you dare to ask why me but not in a self-pity whiny way. I

tried that. That doesn't work. Self-pity is a parasite and it just shrivels your soul. It's bad.

But the why me with brave courage is really what warriors do. To say, because the devil is a legalist, why did he have access to me? Why did he have access? I think I've talked about this passage on the show in the past.

But James 4:7, it's so often taken out of context. I'll hear people say if the devil is messing with you, just resist him. That's not exactly right. It is: submit to God, resist the devil; and he will flee from you.

Submit to God is a military term and it means to get back in rank. So the enemy, if you've given him access, if you're out of rank he's a legalist and he's going to take it. So their first wise question is to say, why Lord is he coming against me? Because one, maybe I've given him access. Or two, maybe he senses I'm on the verge of a breakthrough. And what my friend Maria said, the tall angel, she said, "If you're getting battered, she says search your heart. If God brings something, then repent and then roar."

But she said, "If he brings nothing, then just roar!" I love that so much because -- and it is not to say every battle is your fault but it is wise to say search me, O God. Because there have been times when something was coming against me and I thought I was innocent and then I realized I'd been coddling fear or I was disappointed or something. We're all going to feel these things. But I think now in this day we have to be quick with this stuff so that our soil is ready for when the outpouring comes, we're ready for it.

RANDY: That's big! Do you think a lot of times we try to resist the devil or try to fight our battles without having the proper authority line established?

SUSIE: Oh, I'm so glad you asked that! So Watchman Nee once wrote that you can't have authority unless you're under authority. So if you look again at James 4:7, submit to God, resist the devil, and he will flee. What flee means in that part of the verse is he looks for a place of safety. So the enemy runs for his life looking for a place of safety. If he's not found a safe haven

in you, he's going to go find it somewhere else. But imagine how often, when we get out of rank, and we feel entitled to our bad attitudes, we usurp authority, we pick apart the pastor's sermon, we get jealous of her outfit, whatever, and we just kind of linger with those things as if we had the luxury of doing that, he will take it. What I'm thinking right now is that he's looking for every open door because he knows his time is short.

So we don't walk in the fear of the enemy. But as we walk in the fear of God and we take that seriously, we submit to God, resist the devil, if you could peel the sky back you would see some Christians running for their lives, and he's intimidating -- a spirit of intimidation is a very big thing right now. But then you'd see other Christians stomping their foot and he's running for his life. And he's running for cover trying to find a place of safety.

I think getting too arrogant and kind of picking a fight with the devil is not wise. He's a foe and we're no match for him on our own. But under the authority of Christ, we have the blood of Christ, the promises of Christ and we have the capacity, the biblical stance to stand and say, you must go. You can't have my family. You can't do this to me any longer. And there is something so powerful in knowing our place.

SHEILA: Do you know what it feels like to me? Remember when Jesus put mud on the eyes of the blind man and told him to go wash, and he said, "What do you see?"

"I see people that are kind of like shapes, trees." I feel like we're entering into a season of having our eyes washed again and suddenly, we see with clarity and we wake up and we rise up.

You talk about a dream you had one night because you were very troubled by just everything going on in the world. What happened in that dream?

SUSIE: I'm so grateful for the opportunity to tell you about this because I'm an intercessor at heart. As you can tell, I have emotions. So I feel things very deeply. And it was a couple of years ago, it was October and there was just news coming out about different levels of corruption. There were man-on-the-street interviews and people didn't care. Like even if that's true, truth is

being thrown to the ground. I think it says that in Daniel and another place in scripture. And I just despaired over it. I'm like, how do we do this in a post-truth? It is not even a post-Christian, anymore, it is a post-truth society. People don't care about truth.

And I couldn't find clarity or peace. And I went to bed kind of depressed about it. And as someone who has struggled with sleep, it was surprising to have such a vivid dream. But in the dream, it was from the Lord, and people have different theologies around dreams, but it is biblical. Years ago, we started asking God, speak to us in our dreams.

This was one where I'm standing in this pile of rubble. And the rubble went for about the size of a football field, and there were chunks of a building that were halls of power. Clearly, these halls of power had crumbled, and I was up to my knees. And the warmth of the sun was on my face.

And off to the left was kind of a glowing heavenly city and that was the true halls of power, and they were orange and pinks and yellows, and it was sort of glowing. And I'm standing but I had this look on my face, like, no way! And I look behind me and every 20 feet there was another person standing in the rubble.

And in my dream, I'm watching myself as if from a lens above, and all of us were like in awe. And I knew in the dream we were all intercessors and this was infrastructures of corruption. I understood the power of intercession.

And I woke up and I happened to stumble upon Psalm 46, Isaiah 25 and 26, if you have time you'll have to go look because it talks about these structures coming down to dust never to be rebuilt again. It reminded me do not underestimate the power of prayer.

When you are walking in righteousness in the fear of the Lord, when you take seriously the words that come out of the Lord's mouth, he's going to take seriously the words that come out of your mouth. And this is another time for us -- this is the time for intercession. Because those, I believe those infrastructures are actually crumbling and cracking right now. They're shaking and we need to have hope and have faith that God has no rival and we're going to see him move in

our day. I believe that.

RANDY: When I look at the title of your book, *Strong in Battle*, I think maybe it's not just a hey, here's a guide to if you want to be in the -- or if you find yourself in a battle maybe this will help you. I think what you're saying maybe is you're going to be in a battle, if you're not already in one right now or just didn't come out of one, you better be *Strong in Battle*.

SUSIE: That's right. And it isn't from bootstrap theology. It is not from hiking yourself up or shouting down the darkness. "Humble yourself under the mighty hand of God and in due time he will lift you up." Psalm 18 is this progression of you're battered at the moment when you were the weakest, and the Lord stretched down from on high, and he rescued you from an enemy too powerful for you. He put you in a steady place, he breathed life, he put a new song in your heart, and then you follow that Psalm, and then he makes you a warrior. He gives you spiritual agility. He strengthens your arm to bend a bow of bronze. But isn't just for your freedom, it is for the freedom of many.

SHEILA: For anyone who is watching and thinking, I hear what you're saying about intercessory prayer, but I don't even know what that is. How would you unpack that? Is that a calling specifically to some people? Or is that a calling to everyone who loves the name of Christ?

SUSIE: I love that. I would say it is both just like evangelism. Some have an anointing and gift to just reach lost souls but we're all called to share our faith. I do believe it is a time for us to get together.

On my show a couple of years ago, I just had this sense it is time to form an underground prayer network where you gather with four or five people and you agree with God's Word for the times that we're in. I believe that's stronger than ever. Having met with these four women that I talked about in the previous show, focused purposeful prayer, I'll never again, I'm wrecked for going around in a life group, "Let's take prayer requests." And I think that's super important but I think if you get the mind of the Lord to say we're going to agree with God for our city, for our

community, for our children, for people in places of influence in every sphere of society, when we start to pray together, just start. Pray with others who maybe are more kind of wild prayers and join them, and just learn and pray and cry out to God because he hears and he will move.

RANDY: One more thing I want to touch on because some people may just have come through a serious battle whether physical, emotional, spiritual, all of the above, you talk about what to do when you come out of that. I think it is important to hit that as well because otherwise, it sounds like you're always going to be fighting. But you're saying no, there is that recuperation, that rest.

SUSIE: Yeah. That feels like a really important part of the book because God just knows our limits. When he decides the battle is over he pulls you back from the front lines and it's not meant that you let your guard down. But I just offer questions we should ask ourselves. How has my theology changed from this battle? Do I have lingering hurts and disappointment with God? Have I kind of gone into some unhealthy indulgences to numb my pain? Or do I have a firmer grip on his promises? What is my perspective of people? Because some people come through the battle and they're judgmental and jaded about those who suffer in lesser ways like that ain't nothing. Well, you know what? Or are you full of compassion because of the compassion and comfort you've received? Are there places in me that still need to be healed?

Here's another really good question, what was that shining moment in the battle where the storm raged and God met me? Because that is the centerpiece of your testimony so figure that out and then you get ready. And you should be ready to tell your story. And what do you know about God now? What are some of the takeaways from this battle that you didn't have before?

And then I get just some wisdom for the off-season. Up your worship. Worship with greater intensity. Deepen your study of His Word; enjoy his presence. Maybe see a counselor; some people have posttraumatic stress after a long -- you know? But I also say remember good memories. Go back to some good memories because it changes your physiology to remember that God has been good. I have a history with God which reminds me I have a future with him as well.

And then laughter is super important. You need to belly laugh because it is so healing. So those are just some pieces of advice. When you just come off, don't just numb out, don't just go, I'm glad that's over. Take some true inventory so that you are skillfully walking away with something in your hands. And then take care of your soul.

SHEILA: You mentioned something that happened to Joshua on his way to Jericho. What was that?

SUSIE: Yeah! That jumped out at me as well, walking through my battles because in Joshua in the earlier part of the book, God charges Joshua, "I'm for you. Be strong, be courageous, don't fear, and don't be dismayed. I'm with you wherever you go."

And then a little bit later, Joshua comes upon this man on the road with a sword. And Joshua says, "Are you a friend or a foe?"

He says, "Neither."

I've heard leaders use this story because he said, "I'm a commander of the Lord's army." I've heard leaders use this story to claim neutrality in a conflict but that is not at all what this story is about. He said, "Neither side."

So in other words, God was saying, I'm on your side. I'm for you but are you on the Lord's side? And that was super important because Joshua's heart was for God.

But some of the people that he led had idols in their tents. That would be -- again, the devil's a legalist and he's going to find an opening when you offer it to him.

I just think we are so used to saying, God is for me, but we're so divided as the body of Christ, so we have to ask ourselves am I for the Lord? Am I sure I'm for the Lord in the things that he's for? And I just think that's another really important question that requires humility and teachability to say what are my blind spots? What assumptions have I made? I wrote about discernment and

sometimes, we write off discernment to say that's uncomfortable for me so that's not God.

Well, Jesus upset the status quo all the time so we need to be prepared for moves of God that will make us uncomfortable. Discernment is discerning what is sent by the enemy to disrupt the flock and what is sent by God that might disrupt you but is actually from the Lord.

RANDY: Yeah, that's good. I think people would benefit from your book tremendously. I want to tell you how to get it. Also, you talk about sort of wondering if we're on God's side. You can go to scripture and find some really simple ways to get on God's side. One of those is to reach out, and help those in need and we'd like you to take a look at this opportunity this year where we can put smiles on some children's faces, meet their practical needs with some shoes but do it all in the name of Jesus to meet that need and to be that answer to a prayer. Take a look at this and Sheila and I will tell you how you can get involved.

On the mission field

>> The day my child was born, I was so very happy. But seeing the shape of my little baby's mouth broke my heart. My child has to know love and happiness like anyone else, but everyone just turns their eyes and looks away. Each day I pray that God will send someone to help us. What's a mother to do?

ANNOUNCER: Each day another child already destined to grow up in a developing country, is born with yet another challenge from birth to overcome, cleft lip or cleft palate. And the question remains, what's a mother to do?

Fortunately, every year at this time, *LIFE Outreach International* and our mission partners around the world seek children who need corrective surgery through our Christmas Shoes and Smiles emphasis. The corrective surgery provides them a gift for a lifetime, a smile that will last forever.

We also see children smile when they receive shoes to protect their feet from injury and disease. This Christmas season, help answer the question of what's a mother to do by providing Christmas Shoes and Smiles to children in need.

End of video

In the studio

SHEILA: When I look at these little faces and I think of the mom, you know when you're having a baby the first thing you do when that little one's born is you just want to look at their little face and count their toes and count their fingers. But for so many moms in difficult parts of the world, when their child is born with cleft lip or cleft palate, not only is that seen as something that will be a real struggle and can potentially impact, a baby can't nurse from its mother with cleft palate. But not only that, in so many of the countries we work in, it's seen as a curse from God. And so that child from the moment that they take their first breath, they're sidelined, they're kept away.

And the fact that we work with these amazing doctors on the ground, who have been able to say for \$500 we can do one of these surgeries, we can perform cleft lip, cleft palate surgery and give that child a whole new life. I don't know about you, but I know for me, I don't need one more sweater this Christmas. I don't need another pair of boots. But what a joy it would be if we decided this Christmas it was going to be about other people. And get your whole family, get your Sunday School room, get everybody together and say, let's today remember that we were lost till Jesus came. And now because we've been found we can make a difference in the lives of others. I know you know this too, Randy, when we're on the field there with these people, so so often they will receive the gift but then they'll want to know why did you do this?

RANDY: Yeah, why would you do this? Who are you? That's the beauty of going out in Jesus' name. Scripture says we are his hands and his feet. God has this pattern in the Bible of partnering with people to help other people. And so when we reach out in Jesus' name and do something very practical, whether it's providing that surgery for the cleft lip and cleft palate or putting shoes on these children who don't have shoes, who need some protection on their feet, when we do that

in Jesus' name, we fulfill the scripture. And notice this, we answer the prayer of that mother that looks at her baby and says, God -- sometimes, God, if you're real, maybe if you care, if you exist, can you help me? And he sends you and me to do it.

We've been doing this for several years and it's been such a blessing. I hope that you'll be a part of it this year. We've put shoes on over two and a half million children so far. We've provided surgeries for 2,500 children. We want to increase that. We want to do more this year, but we have to have your help.

Here's the short version, \$180 will put shoes on 50 children's feet. If you want to do a surgery, they're on average \$500 each. Whatever you can do, we're just asking you, let's reach out this Christmas and say, Christmas is about Christ. We're here in the name of Jesus. We want to fulfill that need you have. Will you do that? Will you do it right now? Do it today. We need to do it early so we can get it there in time for Christmas. I pray you'll go to the phone or go online and do it now.

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

RANDY: I hope you are going online or going to the phone right now. Make the best gift you can. I know it is early, but we want this to be a special, special Christmas! And Sheila, we can do it.

SHEILA: Absolutely! And do you know what I'm going to be doing? I'm going to be roaring!

Susie, I just want to thank you so much for sharing this part of your journey. So for any gift at all, please request your copy of Susie's book, *Strong in Battle: Why the Humble will Prevail*. We're so excited to see where you're at and we love you so much.

SUSIE: Love you too. Thank you for having me!

SHEILA: And we will see you next time right here on *Life Today*. God bless you.