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Week 36: Christmas Shoes and Smiles

Randy Robison and Sheila Walsh

Kathie Lee Gifford and Rabbi Jason Sobel

RANDY: Welcome to *LIFE Today*. I'm Randy Robison. Sheila Walsh is with me. And we're very excited. We're all excited because Kathie Lee Gifford is back with us. Now, if you missed the other program with Kathie Lee you need to go to LifeToday.org and watch it too. It was wonderful. We've got her, and we've got Rabbi Jason Sobel via Zoom with us so stick around! This is going to be a great one.

SHEILA: Yeah. Welcome Rabbi, it is so great to have you back with us. We just love you and I'm so grateful for your writing. You and our darling Kathie Lee have written this book called *The God of the Way*. A journey into the stories of people in faith that changed the world forever. How did you two get together? [Laughing]

KATHIE: A mutual friend, a girl named Leslie Burbage. She said, "You've got to meet this guy. You've got to meet him." I was in New York at the time at the Today Show. I go, "I can't meet with the people I already -- I don't --" She says, "Kathie, you have to meet Rabbi!" So I kept hearing about the Rabbi this, the Rabbi that. I said fine! I was in a bad mood because it was Christmas time at Rockefeller Center. That's the only -- tourists love it, people who work there hate it! It is the worst time of the year for us. So I said fine!

So he came over and we sat, I took him to my favorite little restaurant. It's still there called Nerai's. Sat with him for a couple of hours and just was blown away by the depth of his knowledge. I said I don't believe in Christmas anymore. I know that it didn't happen like this. Didn't happen like that. And he's just looking at me. Remember, Rabbi? Just looking at me. He goes, "Well, I can give you a good reason why you should be grateful for Christmas." And he

told me all about Hanukkah and how Jesus -- he and I both believe Jesus was not born in December but he was conceived during the festival of lights. Right, Rabbi?

JASON: Absolutely! Absolutely! Yeah! It was a great time. It was the beginning of destiny!
[Laughing]

KATHIE: And the best part of it is I knew I had to write a book about people learning the Bible the way it was originally written. I had been taught all these wonderful things by these great teachers in Israel. I felt so blessed to have sat under -- so I said all right, Lord, I'll write this book. I don't want to. I don't like to write academic books. I'll write it.

I got about 50 pages in and I went, I don't have a book! I have a pamphlet! I don't have a book. But I'm going to call up that guy that blew me away. So it was meant to be. So he wrote that one with me. And this is our second one together; it is not going to be the last. We just, we both have a passion for the Word.

SHEILA: I loved the first one. The first one as you all probably know, *The Rock, the Road, and the Rabbi* which was just phenomenal. But this new one, *The God of the Way*, I wanted to ask you, Rabbi, why did you divide it into those four particular sections that you did?

JASON: Yeah, the four sections are connected to the oratorio that Kathie Lee wrote. So this connects to the music, and I think it is a powerful combination. Because we want people to see the scriptures in High Definition. So when you can listen to it and then watch it and engage it with that level of creativity and then say okay, let's go deeper and understand more about these characters. But I also think the section titles are just so powerful.

SHEILA: They are!

JASON: It's "The God of His Word," and "The God of the How and the When," and "The God Who Sees" and "The God of the Other Side." So just even the section names were so compelling. So it was just great to work on this with Kathie and bring this truth forth.

KATHIE: The movie itself took four years to make. So this, the book was -- we said we should have a companion book for the movie because people are going to get excited about what they see. But they're only getting it in the briefest of ways. It is a 90-minute movie.

But this book tells the story of creation all the way through the Bible to the story where Jesus said, "Get in the boat and meet me on the other side." So he was very faithful to follow what we had done in the film. That's why the names -- because he's got a million books in him. He's got a great one out also called *The Mysteries of the Messiah*.

SHEILA: Yes! I have that one too.

KATHIE: You want to go deep, boy, you go into -- yeah, yeah!

SHEILA: One of the stories you unpack, Rabbi is the story of Peter and Cornelius. Why is that such a hugely significant story to unpack these days?

JASON: I think the story is so significant for a number of reasons. I mean obviously, it is so significant because really the story of Cornelius is really about the birth of the church. Because up until then, all the followers of Jesus, all the disciples were Jewish. It was the Jewish believers that received the Holy Spirit in Acts chapter two. And in Acts chapter ten, really the amazing thing is that Cornelius, a centurion, someone who would have been despised by the Jewish people, here's this God-fearing man who winds up having Peter come to him because of a vision. And he receives the same Holy Spirit showing that there are no second-class citizens in the kingdom -- Jew and Gentile are meant to unify.

But I think there is something even more there that is really beautiful because it is also in a sense about second chances when it comes to Peter. Because what's amazing is that Peter has this vision of this sheet coming down from heaven in Joppa and that's the same place where Jonah fled from the Lord because he didn't want to go to Nineveh and preach repentance and salvation to the Gentiles. The only prophet that goes to the Gentiles.

So here's Peter who has this opportunity to get right what Jonah got wrong. And we talk about how he is a New Testament Jonah and how God uses him to open up the gospel to the nations.

SHEILA: Amazing!

RANDY: Let me ask you about the title really quick because I love all these stories. I've got a long list and I want to get through as many as we can. But "The Way," what do you mean by *The God of the Way*?

KATHIE: Well, again, everything was about the God who sees, to begin with. And then I thought as we write more oratorios, "The God of the How and When" is how God takes sometimes centuries and centuries for his promises to come true. Other times, he does it instantaneously. But to God, time is not measurable to eternal Jehovah Elohim, who created all things and sustains them to this day.

So we had "The God of the How and When," and then "The God of His Word" because His Word is just critical. And then the Word became flesh and dwelt among us. And then "The God Who Sees," we did some new things in that one, people will see. And then "The God of the Other Side" because I wanted to show Jesus came and changed the way we look at one another. He taught us how to love one another.

And so I was looking for a title that would encompass everything. And I love when Jesus says, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes unto the Father except through me." And people think in this world that that's a terrible thing. That you're keeping people out. No, no, no! He's proclaiming who he is. But he is proclaiming who he is for all people. And if I want anybody at the gate, I don't want Peter who denied Jesus three times. I don't want anybody human at that gate deciding where we're going to be eternally. I want Jesus there, the one who loved me enough to die for me. So it is good news that Jesus said that. So -- and it is always saying in the Psalms David -- Rabbi, talk about how the paths, and David all his songs about "show me your ways, Lord and teach me." I don't know if it is a metaphor for just the walk, the

journey with him.

JASON: Yeah, I think it is so significant too because we think today of believers as being called Christianity or Christians but that's not what they were called in the book of Acts. They were actually called "The Way" in Hebrew: Ha derek. So the first followers of Jesus referred to themselves as "The Way" because he is *The God of the Way*, the one who made a way for us and the one who shows us the way that we're called to walk in a way that changes and transforms our life.

SHEILA: That is beautiful! And that's why it is so important, why we're so grateful for what you do, Rabbi. Because through Kathie Lee, I was introduced to you and I've read your books and studied and researched and underlined, and it is just like your faith explodes.

KATHIE: It explodes. We're all so lukewarm in our western world. Even faithful church-going people go, why am I not excited about this? Why don't I feel the joy of the Lord that's supposed to be my strength? I don't have it. When I started studying rabbinically with people like Rabbi and others that are too many to mention, and I love them, my little ember of faith exploded into a burning desire to know my Savior better.

So that's why we preach the Word as -- we don't preach it. I'm certainly no preacher but share the original source material. Right, Rabbi?

JASON: Absolutely. And I think in *The God of the Way* we talk about, in the opening section, Joshua and God's choice of Joshua as a leader. And one of the reasons why God chose Joshua is because Joshua was a true disciple -- the great, true disciple of Moses. Because in Hebrew the word for disciple is talmid. And both in Greek and Hebrew, the word for disciple, what it literally means is a learner. Because you can't say you're a lover of God if you're not a learner.

David was a man after God's own heart because he loved God's Word. He hid His Word in his heart. So you can't say you love someone if you don't get to know them. And when we stop learning about the one we love, then our love goes lukewarm. I think that's why it is so important

to go deeper and to continue to learn and to see the Bible from a deeper perspective and not just stay on the surface so that our love can burn stronger and deeper in us.

RANDY: Yeah, that ties into another thing that y'all talk about in the book. I'd love to hear either of you to comment on it, and that is this idea of sojourning faith. What is that? You're laughing, what does that mean?

KATHIE: Well, in our culture again, so much emphasis is put on salvation; that one moment when we understand the gift we've been given, and we receive it and we accept it. But actually, the Bible talks so much about what happens then, the pilgrimage, the sojourn. And that's where -- that's where the excitement is. We love our moment of salvation but we're supposed to feast on the Word every single day. God gives us manna every day, but just 24 hours of it. It's not over at salvation, it is the beginning of everything.

And the Rabbi can probably say it much better than I did just then. But what's a sojourn to you?

JASON: Yeah, yeah. The first sojourners in the Bible, as we talk about in the book were Abraham and Sarah, and they had a sojourning faith. God tells them to leave everything and to go to a place that he promised. And they'd never been there, didn't know where he was going. And God says to him, "Lech-Lecha" go. And Abraham sojourns in the land but in his generation he never fully possessed it.

But what's interesting is that the call to Abraham to leave everything begins with the words "Lech-Lecha" and that was the first of ten tests Abraham went through. And the last test was offering Isaac upon the altar. "Take your son, your only begotten son whom you love" and that test begins with the same words, "Lech-Lecha" -- go. And so what's this connection in sojourning faith? Sojourning faith, the first time God calls Abraham, he says to Abraham, will you give me your past? Will you leave everything that you know behind to follow me and believe me for the promise? And then he tells the last test off for Isaac with those same words, well, offering Isaac, Isaac represented the future, everything God promises. This is the child of promise and everything is based upon Abraham having children. And God is saying, okay,

you've given me your past, but will you trust me with your future? Do you have a sojourning faith that's willing to lay down the thing you love the most, the thing you waited so many years, the thing that seemed like a miracle? And Abraham was willing to do it.

And ultimately, he looks up, and sojourning faith always looks up, and he sees an angel and the angel says there is a ram caught in the thicket. Don't offer your son Isaac. And God always has a ram in the bush for us. He always has a provision for us. It might seem delayed. It might wait until the last moment when it seems like the promise is going to die, but we have to have faith to believe that God is there. He sees and he will provide.

RANDY: You can say he is *The God of the Way*. [Laughing] He provides the way.

KATHIE: He finds the way, he is the way.

SHEILA: One of the things I love about -- we had the privilege of previewing the movie and the book, is that I find that even as someone who is a believer for many years, it built my faith up. Because I think, Jesus saved my life, the Word of God saves my mind. Because so often, I get weary in this world, sometimes.

KATHIE: That's the words these days of most people. Exhausted is another one everybody uses. Jesus said do not grow weary in doing good things, good things. But we can't do it on our own is the whole thing. Rabbi has just come through another bout with COVID. He can't do that on his own. He's got all the faith in the world; he needed the Lord to heal him. Boy, nothing will get you wearier than that! And everybody has been through a couple of really tough years. And so, more than ever we need to look to "The Way" for our way through it.

RANDY: We also need something else that you talk about. I think we have enough time to cover this one, it is so good. You talk about the power of the Word in bringing order from chaos. I think that's beautiful, especially with what you're talking about. Just all the craziness that's been going on. We need a little order in our chaos and the Word of God does that.

KATHIE: And the word we love to use is instead of order we want his shalom. Yes! Right, Rabbi? Take that one. That's up your alley, baby!

JASON: Yeah! There's so much there. We live in a world that's increasingly chaotic, and we live in a world that is full of chaos. And what we have to understand is that chaos kills. That was the very beginning of creation, there was chaos over the face of the deep.

I'll never forget, I've watched the TV show *Hoarders* a few times, and it is just like these people hoard so much stuff their home becomes chaotic, and that chaos literally kills a relationship. There is literally no room. And until order is brought out of that chaos, there can't be life or blessing. Because order leads to alignment and alignment leads to blessing. And part of that order and that alignment is a relational alignment that God is wanting to bring.

And when it says, "The Spirit of God hovered over the face of the deep," in Jewish tradition it is actually "The Spirit of Messiah hovering over the face of the deep." And when Jesus dies on the cross, one of the reasons why there are three hours of darkness is because Jesus has to go back to the very beginning when there was nothing but darkness and chaos, and he is suffering in the midst of chaos. Because he descends to that moment on the cross of formlessness and void and darkness. So that by his death and resurrection he can overcome the chaos for us and restore the shalom of God in our life. Which literally, shalom means: Nothing missing, nothing broken. It is that completeness and wholeness. It is the exact opposite of chaos that the world wants to bring. But Jesus promises his shalom, his peace, and his wholeness in our life.

SHEILA: And let me simply say, if you don't want this book, you've lost your marbles. That is just --

KATHIE: You've lost your way! [Laughing]

SHEILA: Yeah, you've lost your way. That is just a tiny bit of the incredible wisdom that is packed into this book *The God of the Way*.

And also, the phenomenal new movie, which we're just praying you'll all go see. And take friends! Don't just take your Christian friends, take your neighbors, take the people that you think don't understand how glorious God is.

And to get your own copy of the book, what we're going to do is we'd love to show you people that we care for a lot -- a lot of little children around the world who are born with a deformity that would be immediately fixed here if they were born in the states. But where they are, there is such poverty and it is much more difficult. That's when you and I get to be Jesus' boots on the ground. So 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

Randy: As we travel around the world, one thing we've noticed is the condition of the feet of so many children. We see children all over the world running around barefoot in some terrible conditions. And it's not just unsightly, it is unhealthy and potentially, deadly.

As we give shoes, which is a wonderful Christmas gift, keep in mind that we're actually giving them a chance for better health, potentially even saving lives. We are protecting them from some really debilitating diseases, things like hookworm, and several things that can happen in their feet. These protect them. Just like the smiles when we go in and correct a cleft palate, we're not just giving them a cosmetic change, we're actually improving their health. Everything we do is to improve the health of others physically and spiritually.

So go to the phone or go online now. Give the best gift you can as we give Christmas Shoes and Smiles.

End of video

In the studio

RANDY: I hope you're going online or going to the phone now and making the best gift you can. This Christmas can be so special!

Sheila, I think people are going to want this book. And I'd love to give it to them when they support the outreach.

SHEILA: Any gift at all just say I want my own copy of this book. And Rabbi, I just want to say to you, thank you for stewarding the wisdom that God has deposited in you. There's a lot you could have kept to yourself but you generously give out of everything that you have learned and we are the great recipients. So thank you.

JASON: Thank you so much. It is such a blessing to be here. And for all the lives that you are impacting around the world through the mission work you're doing, it is just incredible. And it is just amazing to see how the Lord is using you all. Thank you.

SHEILA: Kathie Lee, we have no words. We love you and we thank you. Go see the movie!

KATHIE: Yes, take your friends who don't know how much God loves them, everybody. They will see that.

SHEILA: They will!

RANDY: Thank you, and we'll see you again next time here on *Life Today*. Bye-bye!