

10/5/22

Week 41 Rescue LIFE

Sheila Walsh

Holding on to Hope

SHEILA: Hi! I'm Sheila Walsh. Welcome to *LIFE Today*. Reading my mail recently and looking at posts on social media, which I'm trying to do less and less these days, but I've noticed a common theme, people losing hope. Honestly, it is not difficult to see why the news at home and around the world is bad. So many things are unprecedented, the worst we've ever seen. Have you ever noticed that they use that phrase almost every night on the news? Barry, my husband pointed it out the other night. He said, "Let's count how many times they say 'unprecedented' or 'worst we've ever seen.'" But it does seem that way. So my question for you and me today is how do we, as committed followers of Christ, live in these days?

So for everything in life, I turn to the Word of God. I don't know if you've gotten a little lazy in your Bible reading. It's easy to do. Life is busy. We've got children, we've got things going on. It's tempting to not dive deep. But Jesus said this is the bread of life. This is a living love letter from God to you and me. And so, it is such a priority in my life and has made such a difference. Even a verse like this, in that last hugely significant conversation that Jesus had with his closest friends that John recorded for us, Jesus said this, "In this world, you will have trouble. But take heart, I've overcome the world." So Christ is acknowledging two realities, there will be trouble and he has overcome.

So how do you and I hold on to hope in the midst of difficult days? You know some of us might need a place to start, to actually trust Jesus for the first time. And some people, well, maybe we need a place to start again. We need to remember the power of the Word of God. Do you remember it says here: *Your word is a lamp to guide my feet and a light for my path*? Yesterday, I was rereading a story that I'm very familiar with from Mark's gospel. But I read it with fresh eyes thinking of what we've all been through in the last

couple of years, and I found fresh hope in this one woman's story and the fact that after so many years of trouble and isolation she was still able to hold on to hope. Now I have taught from this story for years but there was something about it that as I was reading it yesterday the Holy Spirit just arrested my attention and helped me see how relevant this is for you and I right now.

So let me read from Mark chapter five: *Jesus got into the boat again and went back to the other side of the lake, where a large crowd gathered around him on the shore. Then a leader of the local synagogue, whose name was Jairus arrived. When he saw Jesus, he fell at his feet pleading fervently with him. "My little daughter is dying," he said. "Please come and lay your hands on her; heal her so that she can live."*

Jesus went with him, and all the people followed, crowding around him. A woman in the crowd had suffered for 12 years with constant bleeding. She had suffered a great deal from many doctors, and over the years she had spent everything she had to pay them, but she had gotten no better. In fact, she had gotten worse. She had heard about Jesus, so she came up behind him in the crowd and touched his robe. For she thought to herself, "If I can just touch his robe, I will be healed." Immediately, the bleeding stopped, and she could feel in her body that she had been healed of her terrible condition. Jesus realized at once that healing power had gone out from him, so he turned around in the crowd and asked, "Who touched my robe?" His disciples said to him, "Look at this crowd pressing around you. How can you ask, 'Who touched me?'"

But he kept on looking around to see who had done it. Then the frightened woman, trembling at the realization of what had happened to her, came and fell to her knees in front of him and told him what she had done. And he said to her, "Daughter, your faith has made you well. Go in peace. Your suffering is over."

Twelve years! Twelve years is a long time to hold on to hope. And it's hard for us in our modern culture to understand what her world was like. But for 12 years she had been alone. She'd been a lonely, shunned woman. Think back 12 years in your own life; think

how old you were then. Think of what was going on in your life at that point. That's how long this woman had been isolated from anyone, family, friends, synagogue. Because of Jewish laws concerning cleanliness, she is totally isolated. I mean no one can touch her, no one can hug her. If she falls no one can help her. She can't eat in anyone else's home. She is totally isolated.

I wonder if you can relate to that. One of the hardest things about the COVID pandemic was how isolated we were. Remember we couldn't hug anyone. We stayed in our homes. I thought about people in nursing homes or retirement communities who were isolated to their rooms. I have a very dear friend who has moved into one of those communities. I mean she is still very fit and active but it just seemed like the best situation for her. I was concerned for her in the first year of COVID and so I would call and see how she was doing. I didn't realize until one day that she wasn't allowed outside her room. That yeah, they would bring food, but she said, "They would leave a tray outside of my room." It was as if she was a prisoner.

I think about you. So many of you who have written to me are elderly, living alone, feel isolated anyway, and then COVID hits. How did that impact you? Not able to go to church? I get letters from people who are in prison and they say that even for them COVID had an impact, families weren't able to come and visit.

Well, the woman in our story, she's not only isolated but she is financially ruined. She had spent everything she had trying out anything a doctor suggested, even the kind of quack things that when you're desperate you'll try anything. And not only wasn't she even just a little better, she was actually worse than she'd been before. And she was financially ruined. That's terrible! To be lonely and be in a desperate financial position just makes you feel so vulnerable.

Then she hears about this man Jesus. She hears that he's been healing people. So what does she do? She's not allowed to be out in a public crowd, that would be a huge risk. And if she thinks about it, she shouldn't be there. If she touches anyone by mistake, she

will make them unclean. But she follows anyway because she's desperate.

She tries to find a place to stay, kind of far back so she can still see Jesus so if there is a moment where the crowd parts even just a little bit because her faith says this, I don't even have to have him turn and look at me. I don't even have to have him touch me. I believe that if I can even just touch the edge of his garment I will be healed.

But then something goes really wrong. Jesus is leaving. If you think about it, Jairus is a lead rabbi. I've read a lot about him in early Christian literature; a very respected, good, godly man, kind of like your senior pastor who says to Jesus, "Help my daughter." And Jesus immediately turns. Now our friend in the story is the opposite of Jairus's daughter. There is nobody fighting for her. She is no one. Even in the passage, she is called "a woman in the crowd" and he is a lead rabbi.

Have you ever been there? So desperate for Jesus to do something in your life but you just don't feel you're important enough? You believe that maybe he'll do that for someone else in your group or you know that he's moved in somebody else's life, but you think—have you ever been tempted by the enemy to think, but who are you? Why would God do anything for you? Or maybe you feel like you've messed up in your life so you think, why would God even spend time with me?

Well, this story brings hope to every single one of us. But here's her dilemma, as she watches Jesus begin to hurry away, has she missed her moment? Not only that but if she has time to reflect on what she has been taught since she was a little girl, that if she touches Jesus, from her understanding, she's now made him unclean and then he can't go and heal the girl, she'll die.

So let's bring it back down to you right now. What would hold you back from reaching out to Jesus, from touching the hem of his garment? What are the lies that the enemy whispers to you? Who do you think you are? There is no hope for you. Why do you even keep holding on to hope? Nothing is ever going to change for you.

Here's the truth, Satan is not omniscient. That's a big word; it simply means he doesn't know everything. He can whisper a lie to you. He does not know if you're going to believe it or not. Only God knows everything.

I love this in Psalm 139, the first couple of verses: *O Lord, you have examined my heart and know everything about me. You know when I sit down or stand up. You know my thoughts even when I'm far away.*

And the enemy does not know how you will respond. It is almost as if, imagine yourself standing at the top of a flight of stairs that lead down into a basement. You're standing there and the first lie comes, who do you think you are? If you agree with that lie, you've just taken the first step down. Then another lie comes, you'll never change, you'll never be any better. If you buy into that, you're another further step down and another step.

But I want to remind you that the enemy does not know how you're going to respond, and so we combat every one of his lies with the truth of the Word of God. For every problem that the enemy can highlight, there is a promise from Christ to counter. So say you struggle with anxiety, which a lot of people are these days. Here's a promise: *Do not be anxious about anything, but—and here's what we do—in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.*

Maybe you think, nobody understands how much I have to carry, how much I'm dealing with in this life. Here comes the promise and an invitation: *"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."*

God's truth outweighs the enemy's lies every single day of the week. So let's go back to our friend in the story. She sees that Jesus is leaving and with the last drop of hope she

has, she reaches out and touches the edge of his garment. And immediately, she knows. She feels it in her body, the power of Christ surging through her, and the bleeding stops. And Jesus felt it too. He says, "Who touched me?" Now, the disciples don't understand. They're like, "Lord, this is a crowd. Everybody touched you." And Jesus waits. "Who touched me?" Because it cost Christ. He felt healing grace go out from him.

Now, it's amazing to me that he doesn't point her out. He knows who she is but he gives her a chance to tell her story. If she had walked away, would she have been healed? I know the bleeding stopped, what about the shame? What about everything that she's carried all these years? Would she have gone home and thought, I stole a miracle! I don't know what happened to that child. And would she have lived for the rest of her life tormented by the enemy and covered in shame?

So Jesus gives you and me an opportunity to do one thing, to tell him the whole truth, and that's what she did. We read that she fell on her knees before Jesus and told him the whole truth. I love the word *salvation* is a little Greek word *sozo* means to save, yes, but it means to heal, as well as ongoing work. See, our darling sister thought she just needed physical healing, but she needed so much more.

The presence of Christ is a greater miracle than the absence of disease. Okay, I'm going to say that again because it sounds a little out there, but I believe it with everything in me. The presence of Christ is a greater miracle than the absence of disease.

So Jesus said to her, "Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace and be freed from your suffering."

Go—not go home, go in peace. Now she's in relationship with him. She could have gone away healed but not in peace. Now, what about Jairus's daughter? In the time that Jesus spent with this woman, the girl died. But Jesus went to her home and healed her. But here's the mystery though. Here's why we're people of faith. If you think about it, the girl is 12 years old, this woman has been suffering for 12 years. So in one situation with the

daughter, Jesus intervened straight away, the same day, and for another, she suffered for 12 years. Now we don't know why. We don't understand. God's ways are so much higher but that is why you and I are called to hold on, to hold on to hope, to hold on to Jesus.

I want to introduce you to some people who are struggling right now to hold on to any kind of hope because the darkness is so great. The wonderful news is you and I have been given a little candle and we can shine some light right now into that darkness. Would you watch this?

On the mission field

Open Captions: *An estimated 4.8 million women, girls and boys are currently victims of sex trafficking.*

SHEILA: Who is your best friend?

Interpreter: She said no. Nobody.

SHEILA: Do you have anyone that you trust?

Interpreter: No.

SHEILA: Many of the girls I've met on these trips are young, defenseless teenagers and they all have similar stories. They wake up next to a much older, strange man and they're held captive for weeks, months, or even years.

Do you remember that first night? Do you remember what that felt like?

Open Captions: It was painful. I cried and ran away. But they hit me and brought me back. I have to sleep with the clients and drink with them. They can do whatever they want.

SHEILA: You and I, as God's sons and daughters, we've got to be the ones telling these

girls, "You have a purpose, you have a future, and you have a hope. There is a God who loves you and he is your friend. You are not worthless. You are not worth just \$10 anytime a man comes through the door. You are priceless."

If we don't rescue these girls right now their abuse and misery will continue night after night. It is our responsibility to protect these precious girls, show them the love of God, and help them heal.

End of video

In the studio

SHEILA: On my first Rescue LIFE trip in Southeast Asia, the number one thing that I understood very quickly was how much I didn't understand. So often we hear about stories of people being trafficked and we think, why don't they just leave? But talking to one of these young girls, and they are very young girls, 12, 13 years old, I asked one of those girls, isn't there an opportunity for you to get away? And she kind of looked at me as if—you just don't understand. But then she told me the people who have taken me know where I live. I have two younger sisters and they have told me, if you run away, we will go and get them. And at 13 years of age, she's staying in this wretched place to protect her sisters.

The thing that I have come to respect so much about RescueLIFE program is that it is in three parts; it's reach, rescue, and restore, and each one is vital. I spent some time with teams where they go up into the mountains into the little villages and begin to sit down with these children and tell them the very thing that might save their life. You think you'd be teaching them about all sorts of fun wonderful things. But they're teaching these children if someone like this comes to your village and offers you this and offers you food or says I have a great job for you in town and you can send money back for your family, they're taught to run away and yell as loudly as they can. So that's part of the work, reaching so they never end up in a place like this.

But then rescue, these girls, it's a living hell. I can't even begin to imagine what it is like for them. Sometimes, they come to the town, and they're taught, you're going to work as a waitress here. And they're given a meal, which is probably one of the best meals they've had in a long time. They don't know it is drugged, and they wake up the next morning in an unthinkable situation, and virtually in a prison. And our teams are boots on the ground in Jesus' name. They go in and they knock down doors and they rescue these girls. And they have those traffickers arrested.

And then comes the third part: Restore. We have this beautiful place called the House of Destiny that many of you helped us establish. What a joy it was to go and see the girls there. A place where they're taught that there is a God who heard those desperate prayers in the middle of the night, and they sent us to let you know that you are loved.

We're asking you to help. We have an amazing matching gift at the moment of \$320,000. People who are supporting us, perhaps you're even one of them, saying yes, we stand with you in this. So it used to be that to begin the process of reaching, rescuing, and restoring a child is about \$128 but now if you can give \$64 that will be matched in our matching gift, and together you will have helped one child. If you're able to do \$128 that will now be matched, and two children will be delivered. \$1280 matched will now rescue 20 children from a nightmare.

So please, please go to your phone. Just give the very best gift you can. But let's determine that as long as this evil is on the earth, those of us who come in the name of the Lord are going to be stronger than the evil that comes against them. Please call now.

Begin video clip

ANNOUNCER: *Innocent children and young people longing to be loved and cared for are being abducted and sold at the hands of violent predators, forced into the evil industry of human trafficking.*

Through Mission: Rescue Life you can reach out to warn children who are at risk for sex trafficking, rescue those already enslaved, and restore young lives and give them a future. With a generous \$320,000 matching gift now your gift of \$128 to help reach, rescue, or restore one child can be doubled to help two children. Your \$64 gift will be matched to help save one child from the horrors of human trafficking. And a \$32 mission rescue gift will be doubled to \$64.

With your gift today, we'll send you "I Hear His Whisper." Each entry in this beautiful 365-day devotional will encourage you with words of comfort, joy, and love as you encounter God's heart and hear his gentle voice.

With a gift of \$128 or more, you'll receive "What Does Your Jesus Look Like?" This captivating book by sculptor, Scott Stearman shares compelling stories and beautiful images revealing how we can be the image of Christ to a watching world.

Finally, please consider a gift of \$1280 which will now help save 20 children. And you may request our inspiring bronze sculpture, "Let the Children Come." Please call, write, or make your gift online.

End of video

In the studio

SHEILA: Thank you! Thank you so much. This is kingdom stuff. This is eternal stuff. You know those things that we do on a daily basis that were fun or important for a season, this is eternal stuff. Because once we have been able to reach, to rescue, to restore that child, we're able to share with them the good news of Jesus Christ. And I cannot tell you how amazing it is to be able to pray with some of these young girls as they give their life to Jesus.

For any gift at all, we have this great 365 days devotional which we hope will bless you. If you're able to give more, a \$128 beautiful coffee table book, *What Does Your Jesus Look Like?* It is our way of saying thank you. But please, keep calling. Let's reach, rescue, and restore in Jesus' name.