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Week 45: Rescue LIFE: Last week

Randy Robison and Sheila Walsh

Stephen Chandler

SHEILA: Hi! Welcome to *LIFE Today*. I'm Sheila Walsh here with Randy Robison. One of the things I love about my life, Randy, is I get to meet some amazing women—I mean some people that are just so on fire for the Lord. Well, last week I had the privilege of meeting a woman called Zai Chandler and I just loved her. She is just so full of the Lord. I did not know at that time that I would have the opportunity just a few days later to welcome her husband to the show! Welcome! It is so good, Stephen, to have you here!

STEPHEN: It is an honor to be here. My wife is proof that God loves me. [Laughing]

SHEILA: I'm intrigued by the title of your book, *Stop Waiting for Permission*. Where was that born in you?

STEPHEN: Man, probably in one of the darkest seasons of my life, and definitely of ministry back in 2015. I'd been pastoring for four years at the time and the church had not grown in about two and a half years. And when I tell you discouragement, I mean just overwhelming insecurity, maybe I was never called, maybe this is not what God had for me, maybe I got as far as I could go.

Honestly, it may not sound good, I tried to abandon the call of God on my life. I tried to hire another pastor. I tried to give the church away. I was saying—

SHEILA: Because you were young, weren't you?

STEPHEN: I was, I was. I would say you have a really bad church if you can't even give it away. Like, nobody—and you know, we talk about how God will open a door for you, sometimes God will close a door and lock you in and say, you're not getting out of here any way you can. I didn't know it at the moment, in hindsight, God was doing something in me before he could do something through me. At the moment, I thought he was just punishing me.

But long story short when I couldn't get out of it, I just kind of surrendered to, okay, God, what are you looking to do and trying to teach me? And connected with some great men and women of God that said, yeah, you're doing some things wrong. There are other ways to develop people, disciple people, and move the kingdom of God forward.

Long story short, five years later, we were named the fastest-growing church in America. We've doubled since then. And the thought just crossed my mind: I was getting ready to quit on something that was full of potential, and God had so much purpose for it, I just couldn't see it because of my own insecurities.

And the heart behind this book is man, there may be people that are getting ready to quit on a marriage, quit on their faith or on a ministry, or investing in their kids because they're not seeing the results that they want to see when they see. And just help people, no, no, no, God has greatness in each and every one of us. And there are also actionable steps of wisdom and understanding that moves us forward to maximize the call of God on our lives.

RANDY: I'm curious because I know it is really easy for us to measure success as the world does and say, oh well, if we haven't added this many people, or we're a mega church or whatever, but surely there is a lot more going on than just the number of people in your church in the success and greatness that God was working on in you.

STEPHEN: Yeah! Definitely. I love when Paul said, "To live is Christ, to die is gain."

He said, "If I go to heaven I spend time with the Father." He said, "If I stay here, I'm going to continue in fruitful ministry." Notice he didn't say "faithful ministry." He said *fruitful*. He said, "I'm going to see kingdom fruit, kingdom results from my time here on earth." And it is so important that we define success biblically, and not the way that the world defines it. Well, if you're rich, you're successful. If you're influential, you're successful. Well, the Bible says that you can have a lot of wealth and it comes with sorrow and you don't have the peace or the joy to enjoy all that God has for you.

So really, helping people understand there is nothing wrong with desiring to be great with ambition, but making sure that we define it the way God defines it.

I love Matthew chapter 20. I think all of the Bible is amazing, inspiring, and a complete comedy.

[Laughter]

And I think sometimes people miss the comedy. Here it is. Jesus literally just gave his own eulogy, like I'm going to the cross, I'm laying my life down. Here is the purpose that I came to earth. And as he is closing up his eulogy here comes this woman with her church finger up, excuse me! Excuse me! Great, great message you just gave. But I was just wondering, can my boys, James and John, sit on your right and your left? I mean can we talk about bad timing?

SHEILA: Read the room, lady!

STEPHEN: Read the room! And I'm reading this and I'm expecting Jesus, I mean, this is get-thee-behind-me Satan, this is flipping-tables, Jesus. I expected him to bring the rebuke of all rebukes. And Jesus never rebuked them for their ambition. He never said how dare you want to be great! Here's what he said. He said, "Now greatness comes with pain, and you have no idea the pain and the baptism that you're going to have to go through." But here's what he said, "If you want to be great, let me teach you how." Don't

do it the way the world does it. The world steps on each other and backstabs and manipulates and lies. He said, "That's not greatness." He said, "Here is greatness: Serve as many people as you possibly can. Do it like I did it," Jesus said. "I didn't come to be served but to serve." We should all desire greatness in every area of our lives, just don't take the path that the world takes.

SHEILA: It's interesting, I noticed you talked about during that time when you were discouraged and not sure what to do that you talked to significant people in your life. How important is that?

STEPHEN: It is vital. I mean anybody who would—this is a bold statement, but it is kind of my personality, I say extreme stuff. Anybody who is determined to do life in isolation will not maximize the call of God on their lives. The Bible talks about godly counsel. Throughout scripture you see the multi-generational blessings pass from a father to a son and mother to their children. I'm telling you, our destiny is locked up in the great men and women of God, that God wants to connect us to.

I connected with some phenomenal men and phenomenal women who taught me how to pray, taught me how to love God, but also, taught me that prayer isn't the only way that you advance the call of God on your life. Like you've got to get a work ethic. You've got to have a little bit of discipline. You've got to build a team of leaders around you. You have to know what I call is your unique genius, which is the gift that God has given you and favors and anoints you in.

We spend so much time looking at people we think are ahead, are successful, and coveting their gifts, their talents, and their abilities instead of discovering the ones God has placed inside of us and developing those gifts.

RANDY: I think we also make another mistake in that in saying, oh, okay. He is the big pastor that can get up and speak and reach people for Christ, that's not me. I think part of what you're also saying is yeah, there is a greatness that God has put inside of you that he

wants to bring out. And we can be a little lazy about that too.

STEPHEN: What God is doing in our church in Maryland just seeing so many people just saved, set free, filled with the power of God, nobody is more shocked than I am. After me, it is probably my mother and father that are most shocked after me. Because I was the most shy, introverted, not the life of the party, not the people's person, not this big orator/communicator. I was a thinker. Because I saw my dad on the platform so much and that was his gifting. I was like, nope, don't want to do that. That's not Stephen, I'm the behind-the-scenes type of person. God dragged me out from behind the scenes and tag, you're it.

What I found is as I stepped further into all that God had for me, I started discovering things about myself that I did not know were there. I'm talking about when I'm 26—not as a 12-year-old or 13-year-old, like in adulthood. My favorite passage is in Proverbs where it says: It is the pleasure of God to conceal a matter, but it is the pleasure of kings to reveal that matter. And I believe that God hides destiny inside of us. I think God hides our gifts.

One of the reasons I think he does that is because if we find our gifts before we find him, we can use those gifts not for the kingdom of God but for our own selfish gain. We see gifted people all over the place that aren't serving God and that gift is from God, but it is not used for God. I think God's saying, no, no, no I'm going to hide it from you because if you get it too soon, it will destroy you. But if you find me and your character is anchored and you are living for my approval, instead of the approval of people and their opinion, then that gift when it is developed and discovered will take you places you never imagined.

SHEILA: I'm wondering about wisdom. Because I'm thinking of people listening saying, yep, you know what? He's absolutely right because I'm a genius. How do you know when you've crossed the line? Are there questions you need to keep asking yourself to keep yourself accountable?

STEPHEN: Absolutely. Now, first of all, there's a lot of humility in that book so they need to grab that part too. Probably the scariest moment of my leadership was in 2015 right after that season when the church wasn't growing, and after got my faith back up, God began to trouble my heart about moving the church about 30 minutes away from where my dad had planted it. He planted it in Baltimore right outside the city and a lot of our people were coming from the Washington, D.C. area, and I was terrified. I was like God, I can't do that. That's not where Dad handed the baton and this legacy. You know church folks. I don't want to be shady, but they don't like change. They don't like to drive 30 minutes away. What if they don't come with me? I'm the new guy! I'm losing it.

But I just couldn't shake that feeling. And what I've learned throughout my life is that faith and foolishness are two different things. That you can live by faith, but you don't have to throw out wisdom, you don't have to throw out common sense. God took me through a process of I told you what to do but I will confirm my word in your life.

So God has given me three keys you need before you take a major step of faith. The first is wisdom. Proverbs 16:16 says, get wisdom more than you get gold, and get understanding, it is valuable. God will never ask you to take a step of faith that will bankrupt your life. He will never ask you to do something that contradicts the wisdom of scripture. So yes, I am going to do this; but does it align with what you've already written in your word?

The second thing is the peace of God. God guides us with his peace. The Bible says to be anxious for nothing. And then at the end of the verse, it says: And God will respond by giving you a peace that surpasses all understanding, that will guard your heart and guard your mind.

So I'm praying through this decision, I'm talking to my wife, is this God? Should we do this? And one morning, I felt like the Holy Spirit said read Jeremiah 29. I'm like, nope. That's not the Holy Spirit because Jeremiah 29:11 is my favorite passage in all of

scripture. I'm like no, it's too easy. He wouldn't give—then the Holy Spirit said don't read 11, read the whole chapter. So I read from the beginning, and I feel like I'm not a Bible scholar. I never knew the greatest promise, "I have a plan for you," says the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you" came when they were in captivity.

SHEILA: Yeah, read the two verses before it.

STEPHEN: They were not home, they were in captivity. They were outside of where their Father put them. And as I'm reading this, it says: Pray for the peace of where you are, build homes, have children, pray for the blessing that you're in that the land will be blessed where you are. And then it says: And I will send you back.

Well, me and my wife had been married for about three years at the time. We didn't have children yet but we were talking about having kids. We were like well, we have to buy our first home first. We want to get a home in a good school district. So we're having all these personal decisions. And then all of the sudden the scripture says: Go to the city, not where your father was, build homes, have kids, pray for peace, and I'll send you back. And when I tell you the peace that just flooded over me in that moment of no, this move is God.

So I have wisdom, I have the peace of God. The final thing is godly counsel. And I stress the word *godly* because you can find counsel for any idea that you—you're looking for people that have evidence in their life that they've heard from God, obeyed, I need to see your resume, is there God evidence that you can hear from God?

I went to my dad first and overseers and they said, no, no. We sense a peace about it; this is God. So I have, as scripture says, in the mouth of two or three witnesses, I have three confirmations that this is God, and I have a peace to take that step.

RANDY: And that takes it, the idea of a leap of faith being this blind jump into nothingness to being something that has some scriptural foundation.

STEPHEN: The Bible says faith is the substance of things hoped for and the evidence. We think faith is just let me just—no, no, God will give you substance. He will give you some evidence. So watch this.

RANDY: And then the fruit.

STEPHEN: Yeah! And he will give you the fruit. So we moved the church, it was probably about 400 people at the time. And about 75 people couldn't make the move with us but 75 new people joined. So it looked about the same. Well, two years later, the church had doubled in size. Three years after that we planted our second location back in Baltimore. He said I will send you back, back to Baltimore where we had moved from.

SHEILA: It gives me chills.

STEPHEN: There were over 800 people on the first day that the campus opened. And if we had stayed there where the favor of God was not for that season, I probably would have been marching around that mountain for those four years. But God said because you obeyed me, I'm going to bless the thing that concerns you.

RANDY: I have a question. You'll have to forgive me. The only thing I know of Baltimore is like *The Wire*. Right?

STEPHEN: That's what everybody says! I'm going to go on a re-represent Baltimore movement.

RANDY: Good for you! And the Ravens, right? But it is pretty rough, is it not? There is a lot of pain in that town.

STEPHEN: There is a lot of pain.

RANDY: How are you seeing God using your willingness and your church's growth, which has a greater impact to hit the pain of a city?

STEPHEN: One of the things I discovered is God will put an anointing on your life that is the opposite of the problem he's caused you to solve. So if there is an anointing for healing on your life, God is going to put you around a lot of sickness because that is the problem that he's anointed you to solve here on earth.

From Jeremiah 29:11, I know the plans that I have for you. My whole life, the book, *Stop Waiting for Permission*, my D.N.A. is vision, purpose. God has a great thing in store for your life; there is greatness inside of you. And Baltimore is a hopeless city. And the hopelessness comes from I can't see anything different. All I know is all I see. Grandma and grandad, they did this. Mom and dad, they did this. And I'm going to do this. And what I realize is God's given me an anointing and a message for a city that desperately needs it. That you're not a victim of your circumstances. The Bible says in Acts, God picked the time in history and the location of your birth for you to maximize your potential. This may look like the enemy's plan, but it is a setup from God for him to maximize all he has for you.

RANDY: And what's that doing?

STEPHEN: Oh, my goodness! We are seeing—one of the things that I love, we're seeing thousands, literally thousands of people getting saved and getting baptized and filled with the Holy Spirit, which is amazing! But that's the starting point, it's not the finish line. The finish line is "Well done, thy good and faithful servant." And we're seeing marriages restored.

We had one couple in our church that was just going through a difficult season, and they ended up getting a divorce. The wife went to our church and then the husband went to a church down the street. And they didn't know me and that pastor were best friends. Well, long story short, and it is a long story, but me and that pastor came together, and it's just a

God story, we ended up bringing those two churches together and it is now one church. So now we have a divorced couple at two different—used to be two different churches but now it's—y'all, they got remarried. God brought that family back together. The peace and the favor of God are on that. God is a restorer of what the enemy is looking to destroy. And we've got story after story of just people, God just laying business ideas on their heart and they're developing ministries and we're grateful.

RANDY: I love it.

SHEILA: This is a fantastic book. And in case you're thinking, well, that's great for leaders. No, this is for everyone. I read this book and it impacted me. So we're going to tell you how you can get your copy of this book, *Stop Waiting for Permission*.

But first of all, we would love to ask you if you would help us with something that we care very much about. There's a lot of hopelessness in this situation but because of Jesus we can bring real hope and you can help us. Would you watch this?

On the mission field

SHEILA: I just wanted to explain why with this particular little girl we're not showing her face. She's 11 years old so we want to do everything we can to protect her.

So when you were just nine years old, something terrible happened to you one night. Why don't you tell us about that?

Open Captions: My dad is in prison and my mom ran away with some man. So I collect cans for food money to feed me and my brothers and sisters. Then one night... [Weeping] a guy on a motor vehicle grabbed me and took me to a bar. I was locked in a room and many different men would come in. If I refused to be with the men, I was beaten.

After a year, they let me out of the room, and I ran away. Right now I'm free but I still have to go out at night to pick up cans. I still have to buy all the food for my family. I'm scared that I will be taken again and made to go back into that room.

SHEILA: I'm horrified by her story. And tragically, she is not the only one—there are so many girls. And here's what I think. If we don't defend her, if we don't say no to those vicious predators, and trust me, they are very well organized, and they're very well-funded so we've got to get organized, we've got to get funded. It is time to let our righteous anger rise to the surface. There are some things that we can say well that's not good, but this is evil. This is absolute evil from the pit of hell, and we cannot abandon these beautiful children who are longing to know that there is at least one person on this planet who cares for them. I want her to know it's you and it's me and we're going to fight for them, in Jesus' name.

In the studio

SHEILA: I'll never forget that girl. I go with Janice, our photographer, and I got to spend the whole day with her. She is the breadwinner for her family because of all these tragic circumstances. When you're very, very poor and someone in your family gets sick then you go to somebody to get a loan to get medicine, and then they up the price and you can't pay it. And that's why so many of these girls end up in these devastating situations.

And she was out at night just collecting cans, like at midnight and one o'clock when all the bars are throwing the cans of beer out. If you get eight cans together it's like a quarter, and that's where she was taken and locked up in a room. I remember saying to her, I think it was to her friend, "Did you ever see a moment when you could escape?" And she said, "You don't understand. The man told me, 'I know where you live, and I know you've got younger sisters. If you leave, I'm going after them.'" Can you imagine the kind of choice that young girl has to face? So I promised her that we would come home and tell her story.

As long as we are alive in this day, we are Jesus' boots on the ground. The evil is very well-organized, we have to be even more passionately committed. If she lived next door to you, you would do everything. We're bringing her right next door to you, and you can do something. Randy, if we all get involved, we can bring some hope and some help.

RANDY: We do, and we have, thanks to you. We've done it. But it is a complex situation in a lot of cases. It requires a coordinated effort. It requires people on the ground. It requires a place to go for healing, a place to go for training. There's a long process here. It's not just getting someone off the street in a single night.

So when we look at it, we look at reaching, rescuing, and restoring these young girls. And we can only do that with your help. Now we do this year-round. We never stop but this is the last week that you'll see this on television during this campaign. And during this campaign, we have a \$320,000 matching gift grant that has been made available to us. We want you to help us complete that goal and reach as many as we can. I'd like to blow right by it and expand this outreach because the need is great.

So here's the way it breaks down. Normally, it costs on average \$128 to reach, rescue, or restore one child. Through the matching grant your \$128 gift today will help us reach, rescue, or restore two children. Many of you can do more than that. \$128 is wonderful for reaching two but if you can give, let's say, \$1280 then that would reach 20.

But here's my prayer. Give the best gift you can. Give out of obedience, out of compassion, out of a willingness to say, yes, Lord, what I have is yours, and I want to be that representative on earth that Sheila talked about. Will you go to the phone or go online right now? Make the best gift you can. Let's hit that goal. Let's go past that goal. Let's reach as many as we can. Do it today.

Last week cause spot

RANDY: God is a God of restoring and with your help we can restore so many lives. So I hope you are going online and going to the phone right now. And request this great book!

SHEILA: Yeah, for any gift at all, ask for *Stop Waiting For Permission* by Stephen Chandler. This book will bless you. Stephen, thank you so much for the wisdom that you've poured into these pages and that you've clearly lived through your life.

STEPHEN: Thank you so much for having me. And thank you for all that you all do in restoring lives. It is just an inspiration and a challenge for us to maximize all that God has for us.

SHEILA: Amen!

RANDY: Amen! Appreciate you guys watching. We'll see you again next time!