

2/1/23

Week six: WFL

Sheila Walsh

Freedom from Shame

In the studio

SHEILA: Welcome to *LIFE Today*! I'm Sheila Walsh and I'm so glad that we have this opportunity to just spend a few minutes together. We talk about so many different things here at *LIFE* and it's fascinating to get your response to some of the things that we talk about. And in particular, that's what's on my heart today.

Not so long ago, I taught a message on shame, and it was interesting to me the number of people from all different walks of life who seemed to relate to that. The more I thought about it and the more I asked the Holy Spirit for revelation about that, I thought well, of course, it would. Because it is the very first thing that happened to Adam and Eve when they decided to step outside of the perfect world that God had given them. He gave them everything and said, the only thing not to do is to eat from that one tree. And the fact that before they sinned, they were able to walk in the cool of the day with God and talk to him.

Until we get home, we won't even imagine what that was like. But the immediate consequence of their disobedience was that suddenly they felt shame. I believe it is one of the things that we've been struggling with ever since. And their response was really the same as our response, they suddenly realized that they needed to be covered and they hid from God. And that's what we've been doing ever since.

I don't know how that sits with you, but I just want you to know if you ever feel like you need to tidy yourself up before you come to God, that's falling back into that very first sin

of thinking I can't come into God's presence the way I am.

So that's one of the things on my heart today for you. However you find yourself, I want you to know that shame doesn't belong to you anymore, Jesus took it on himself. Watch this.

Begin video clip

SHEILA: I think it's the greatest desire of every human heart to be fully loved and to be fully known. But I think sometimes we're so afraid, if you knew the real me you wouldn't love me, that we'd just hold back.

Well, the Lord gave me a powerful illustration one day that spoke to me about how I saw myself and the brokenness that I believed was in me; and it kept me lonely, honestly, for a lot of my life. The illustration happened in probably one of the least likely places. If you've ever been to London, England, or if you've passed through London airport, you're probably aware of a department store called Harrods.

They have some unusual rules for those who are entering the store. For example, you can't wear flip-flops and go into Harrods. You can't wear torn jeans and get into Harrods. And this is another rule, and I don't know how they possibly enforce this but they say, "If you're only browsing, please come to the store between 11:30 am and noon. We want to reserve the rest of the time for people who know what they're coming for." I'm sure that doesn't work very well. Harrods is all about perfection, not necessarily about people.

Well, if you'd been with me in London when I was a seminary student many years ago and walked just a few doors down from Harrods you would have come to what's called the Reject China Shop. It was a small glassware seller who used to carry slightly imperfect things. Things that didn't make Harrods; they didn't meet the Harrods standard. So if the people in Harrods saw there was a slight chip in something or there was a tiny crack then it would immediately be sent down to the Reject China Shop.

Well, one day I decided that I was going to find a cup that had slipped through the cracks, so I spent hours looking because I was a cash-strapped student. I was looking for a perfect cup, one that slipped through quality control. And finally ta-da! I found one, I thought. I remember holding it up to the light and I couldn't see any flaws at all. So I took it home, and I put the kettle on to christen my cup with a cup of tea.

Well, to my horror, the minute I put the boiling water into the teacup the china cracked from top to bottom and fell apart. The water's heat had exposed a flaw that I couldn't see with my human eyes, and my cup, along with my pride in having found one perfect cup, just cracked under the pressure.

Interesting thing is, years later I felt the same way about my life that I felt about that china cup. On the outside I presented a Harrods' standard, everything looked fine, everything looked good but when life got too hot, when the pressure around me mounted, I feared I would crack all the way through. I was sure that if you had to put me in one place you would put me in the Reject Shop, not the place for perfect people.

That sense of not-good-enoughness I carried inside of me for so many years and it left me more days than not feeling real despair and shame. And just from reading some of your letters or some of your comments it made me want to ask, do you ever feel that way? Do you ever feel as if you're just not enough? That you don't quite measure up? That you'll never be quite like so-and-so or whoever you compare yourself to? Or maybe someone in your family. Maybe your children think they're just not enough.

I want us to look at how the lies we believed of being "not good enough" could poison and paralyze us, and they can make us believe that that's how God sees us too. We need to build our lives on the truth of God's word, the truth that sets us free.

It's so easy to believe the lies that our culture tells us; that you have to be a certain size; that you have to be a certain kind of income; you have to drive a certain kind of car or

live in a certain kind of neighborhood. None of that has anything to do with the kingdom of God. As you are right now, whether you live just above the poverty line, or whether you live in a mansion, the love of God sees us all exactly the same.

And God's not impressed by the things we do. What pleases the heart of God is who we're becoming. Because the whole point of my life and the whole point of your life is to become more like Jesus. And knowing the love of God, it's so hard for me to imagine anybody hating Jesus.

But the prophet Isaiah made it clear however that our Lord was, do you remember?
Despised and rejected. A man of sorrows, acquainted with the deepest grief. We turned our backs on him and looked the other way. He was despised and we did not care. Yet it was our weaknesses he carried; it was our sorrows that weighed him down. And we thought his troubles were a punishment from God, a punishment for his own sins!

That's a painful, powerful truth: It was our weaknesses he carried. It was our sorrows that weighed him down. One of the things is when we believe that lie of the enemy, that we're not good enough. He wants to take away what Christ has said is done.

I read an article the other day that said they found some ancient tax records and written across them is exactly the same word that Jesus said on the cross just before he died. When Jesus said it is finished, “Tetelestai” that word has been written over tax documents that they've discovered. And it means: bill paid in full. I don't know what you've done or whatever makes you think you don't measure up but when you have come to faith in Jesus, written over your life, your story is “Bill paid in full.”

I think sometimes when we study the life of Jesus, one of the things you'll notice about Jesus while he ministered here on earth, he modeled the importance of withdrawing from the hustle and bustle of how crazy life can be, to be quiet, to be alone with the Father. He encouraged his disciples to do this as well. Clearly, being alone and being still were important to Jesus. I believe he wants these things for you and me.

Loneliness is something different. Loneliness kind of breeds in the darkness. Loneliness tells us that God will not hold us; that we'd be better off holding on to anything else, somebody else, or something else; that we don't belong. Loneliness, when we listen to it, can lie to us. Even King David prayed, "Turn to me and have mercy, for I am alone and in deep distress."

Well, I did a little digging into the Word. I love to do that! The Hebrew word translated as "lonely" or "alone" here in King David's prayer is *yachiyd*. One Hebrew/English Lexicon notes that this word implies solitary and isolated wanderers who are friendless—solitary and isolated wanderers who are friendless. As far as descriptions of loneliness go, that sounds about right. But there is so much more for us here when we dive into the original language.

This is where studying Hebrew gets even more fascinating. This word *yachiyd* also means sole and by implication *beloved*. When you feel most alone in this world, you are held by the God who loves you as if you were the sole object of his affections. Some days I think we forget that. We talk about God so loved the world, which is a glorious truth. But do you know that God love loves you as if you were the sole object of his affections? When your children are hurting, when your child feels isolated or friendless, he or she is held by the God who lavishes his affections as if your little one was the only one in the entire universe.

While the enemy lies to us through our loneliness, God's love speaks a stronger truth. What I've discovered in my own life is that loneliness, when offered up to him, can lead us deeper into the heart of God. I found that to be so true in my own life. Because everything else that we hope might fill that void is always going to be disappointing. It's never going to measure up. If you want your husband or your wife to fill any broken place in your life, I'm sure they'll do their best but we're all human. That void that we all feel, God alone is the one that can fill that.

Sometimes, loneliness is meant to act like a signal alerting us of a crack in the china of our life. But this doesn't have to make us fall apart though. It's like when a little red light comes on on the dashboard of your car that reminds you that you need to get your oil changed. The experience of feeling a kind of soul loneliness can actually help us. If you pay attention to the signals of loneliness before the waters in your life heat up to the boiling point, feelings of isolation can lead you closer to the heart of God rather than to some kind of breaking point. When you pour your lonely heart out to God you find rest for your soul. You find help in times of need.

We all go through times of despair, and I know it is tempting to let go but pouring your heart out to God helps you find the foothold of your faith once again, and hope you can let go of everything else, and be held by the God who understands your loneliness and is close—very, very close to your broken heart.

Now, like loneliness, shame lies to our hearts telling us that God will let us go or that we should let go of hope in him, we should just forget it because there is something so wrong with us. That crushing weight of feeling not good enough, which is one of the chief dynamics of shame, keeps us in hiding. It keeps us isolated. It keeps us afraid. That fear of being exposed, of being found out.

This will sound like a bizarre thing. When I was a young girl, whenever the phone rang my heart would stop. I would never answer the phone. I would get my mom or my sister to answer it. I had this dread of being found out or something terrible going to be told of me. If you'd said, "What have you done?" I hadn't done anything, but I just had this feeling that something terrible was about to happen. It was only when I learned to bring my shame and my loneliness to Christ that I found his peace. That horrible feeling of not wanting to be found out pressures us to keep up that Harrods' standard image even when we feel like that Reject China cup destined to crack from top to bottom.

But here's the deal, our Mighty-to-save God promises to bring us home to him to deal once and forever with our shame. He takes delight in doing this for you. Indeed, your

Heavenly Father delights in you. How breathtakingly beautiful is that? I believe that if we in the church could learn how to deal with shame...

It's interesting. If you'd asked me a year ago, "Where's the first time that we read of shame entering our world?" I would have said, "Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden." But do you know you have to go back further? We read in Isaiah where Lucifer, who was this stunning angel, who led in worship, beautiful, but he so wanted to be like God that he fell and took a third of the angels with him. I think that's why shame is such a tool in his arsenal because he wants what brought him down.

This is what Isaiah says: *How you have fallen from heaven, o shining star, son of the morning! You have been thrown down to the earth, you who destroyed the nations of the world. For you said to yourself, "I will ascend to heaven and set my throne above God's stars. I will preside on the mountain of the gods far away in the north. I will climb to the highest heaven and be like the Most High."*

That passage symbolically describes the shame God's enemy experienced as his pride, lust, and selfish ambition led to death and destruction. Satan wants to spread his poison. So shame becomes the weapon with which he targets your heart, mind, and soul. The enemy wants you to be stuck in shame. But Jesus wants you to be free.

Let me read you from one of my favorite Psalms. This is David at a really difficult point in his life. But he says this, you can read the whole Psalm later when you've got a minute. Psalm 34 says this. This is verses four and five: *I prayed to the Lord and he answered me. He freed me from all my fears. Those who look to him for help will be radiant with joy; no shadow of shame will darken their faces.*

Whenever you feel that shame coming upon you, recognize where it's coming from. It is not the Lord. Remember Romans Chapter 8 verse one? "There is now therefore no condemnation to those in Christ Jesus." God loves you as if you were the only one, the only object of his affection.

End of video

In the studio

SHEILA: Pretty amazing when you think about it! And I think we have to be really intentional in pursuing how God sees us. Because one of the things that shame does is it makes us want to live in the dark; to kind of pull away from God. But his invitation to you and me is to come into his presence with our arms opened wide, feeling perhaps like Adam and Eve would have done if they would have been able to stay in the daylight and say what have we done? But instead, they hid from God.

I think that's what the enemy wants for you and I, particularly living in the days we're living in. We're living in pretty unprecedented times. You'll hear that phrase over and over whether it's on the news or in conversations or on social media, "We've never been here before." But the interesting thing about shame is we've been there before, and yet that's why Jesus came. Just as the first Adam blew it and we were covered with shame, so Christ, the second Adam came so that you and I could live without that shame.

And there's a difference between those. There is a shame that's good. When you're consciously sinning against God, you feel that sense of this is not how I should be. But don't let that keep you away from your Father. You are loved by the Lord. And if you find yourself in a place right now where you think you know what? I don't think I'm in a good relationship with the Lord. He is waiting with open arms and all you have to say is Father, please forgive me for how I've fallen short. But I'm not going to carry this shame. Jesus took it on himself and that's how I'm going to live.

One of the great things that I've seen as we travel around the world at *LIFE* with various mission projects, I've watched the way that Christ restores dignity to those who have so little. One of the ways we do that at LIFE is by providing clean water so that mothers who had no other opportunity but to give their child water that could physically harm them and take their life, which had to cause so much shame on a mom, now we can say,

we're going to bring clean water to your village so you can lift your face toward the heaven. But we need your help to do it. Would you watch this piece? And then I'll tell you how you and I can make a huge difference.

On the mission field

SHEILA: Waterborne illness is a killer that knows no boundaries. The death of a child is the tragic result of having no choice but to drink contaminated water.

Miriam lives in a shack in Central America. She had to watch her son die in her arms because the only water source she has is a contaminated river.

In South Asia, the journey these women make each day to collect water is filled with potential danger; danger not from the rough terrain but from their water source that causes sickness, and all too often the death of a child.

Pitch is a young mother from a small village in Cambodia. She knows the water she collects is filled with contaminants, but she has no other option. One of her children has already died and the other one is sick.

Thousands of miles away in drought-stricken Angola, the rural clinics cannot keep up with the number of children dying from waterborne diseases.

JAMES: I am by a water source that is so typical of water sources all over the world. The water is contaminated. We know for a fact in this area disease is killing entire families and many children. Would you be an answer to the need of so many people right here and respond by giving them clean water? Thank you so much for doing it.

End of video

In the studio

SHEILA: And that has been James' and Betty's passion for so many years! There is something about when you actually go there. You know we can talk about it on television and try and help you understand exactly what it is like but when you go there yourself, you realize you're so many miles away from any clean water source. And so many of these moms get up early in the morning. We met a lot of the moms who get up at 4:00 in the morning and make the trek to the only river or water well that's available, and those are hand-dug wells. They're not very deep, and the water is filthy and contaminated.

I remember on one of my very first trips when I was walking with a mom and her two children to get water, and as they were pulling the water out of the river, I can see animals that are in the river as well. And yet, there was no other choice. I think in the days that we live in, with so much wealth, and so much technology, to think that so many children die simply because they don't have access to clean water just seems outrageous.

And that's why here at *LIFE* we're determined, not just to pray for these people, but to be an answer to their prayers. And that's why we're asking you to help. Our prayer for this year, and our commitment is to see 350 new wells dug in over 20 nations. Now that might seem like a huge task, but we are the body of Christ. And so when you break it down into doable pieces, there is an entry-level for everyone.

Do you know that for \$48 that will provide clean drinking water for ten people for the length of their life basically? \$144 will provide clean drinking water for 30. Now some of you, in fact, I talked just the other day to a gentleman in Canada who said, "I want to give the money to do a whole water well." That's \$4,800. But that provides clean water—clean drinking water for about 1,000 people. It's amazing. Now that's too much for some of you but could you do \$48? The prayers of these moms and these dads and these grandparents in nations where I don't think, honestly, I've spoken to one mother when I've been on a Water for LIFE trip who hasn't buried at least one child.

I remember, my son is 27 now, but when he was just a wee boy, I did everything to protect him, to make sure that he was getting the nourishment he needed, and he was

drinking enough water. But to be a mom in a place like so many of the countries where we work, where they have no choice, it just seems heartbreaking. And that's why you and I—you and I get to be the good news in a devastating situation.

So please, will you go to your phone, will you dial that number on your screen right now? Will you give the very best gift you can? Let's give Water for LIFE!

Begin video clip

ANNOUNCER: *Every day thousands of lives are lost to waterborne diseases, and nearly half of those are children under the age of five. Through Mission: Water for LIFE, you can give mothers hope and children a future as we provide clean life-giving water for thousands of children and their families before it's too late.*

With your gift today, you can help drill and establish 350 water wells this year! Your gift of \$24 will help provide clean water for five children. A gift of \$48 will help provide for ten. \$72 will provide for 15. And \$144 will help provide life-giving water for 30 people for a lifetime.

With a gift of any amount, we'll send you The Birthright. This book is a liberating and life-changing celebration of your birthright as a child of the King. Discover the joy of coming home to your Father's warm embrace.

With your gift of \$100 or more, we'll also send you the "Moments With Him" mug set. These two beautifully crafted coffee mugs feature scripture on the side, the perfect way to start your day and reflect on the goodness of God.

Finally, please consider a gift of \$1200 to help provide water for 250 people or a gift of \$4800 to help sponsor a complete well, and request our new, inspiring bronze sculpture, "Consider the Birds" inspired by Jesus' words in Matthew 6:26.

Please call, write, or make your gift online today.

End of video

In the studio

SHEILA: Thank you so much. If the lines are busy, please keep calling. You might think, what little can I do? It is just a drop in the bucket. Well, let me tell you, in Jesus' name that bucket is getting filled with clean water. So please call. Give the very best gift you can. And then we have the joy of bringing back the stories of the difference your gift has made in the lives of so many.

So for James and Betty, and from all of us here at *LIFE*, God bless you. Thanks for joining me. We'll see you next time!