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Week 8: WFL

Sheila Walsh

Lisa Whittle (From 5/5/21)

SHEILA: Hello and welcome to *Life Today*. I'm Sheila Walsh. I was thinking today that it's been, I've been here for almost seven years, and now the Lord is closing this door for me and has opened up another.

But I was reflecting on so many of the things I've had the privilege of being part of. I mean working with James and Betty and with Randy, what a privilege. I've learned so much being on so many of our mission trips, and that's been fantastic, to see the difference that Mission Feeding or Water for LIFE or Rescue LIFE makes, or Christmas Shoes and Smiles. I got to go to all those places and learn so much.

But one of the other things that has been great is interviewing some of my favorite guests. And so what I wanted to bring you today was an interview I did some time ago with someone who I just love. She is one of the most transparent, open, kind, and vulnerable people. Her name is Lisa Whittle. She wrote a book called *Jesus Over Everything*. I remember when I got the book before I even had a chance to sit down with her, how that book impacted me. Even just the title, think about that, *Jesus Over Everything*. Jesus over my heartaches, Jesus over my struggles, Jesus over what's in my bank account, what's not in my bank account. But she's just an amazing person. So I kind of wanted to revisit it. And if you missed it then you'll get a chance to catch up here.

So here's a little bit of my interview with Lisa Whittle and her book, *Jesus Over Everything*. Watch this!

Begin video clip

SHEILA: Lisa Whittle, I just want to welcome you to the show. It's so good you're here!

LISA: Thank you, Sheila. This is my delight.

SHEILA: Honestly, when I read even your introduction, I so connected with that. Because you talked about a time where life seemed so simple, where your only job was catching kittens. And how much more complicated life has become. What was kind of the Genesis of this book for you?

LISA: Oh goodness! I think it was that thought in myself about wow! Life used to be so much simpler. It is so complicated. It feels so complicated now. Longing--that longing for the simpler life, longing for the sense of home, which I feel like we all have and feel simpler in some ways, right? It was also conversations I heard people having, which were, "My life feels very complicated, and I don't really know how to fix it."

And then also the conversation I was having with other believers which was, "I really want Jesus to be first in my life, but I also don't know how to do that."

So I began to dig into what that might look like. Those two things: Life being complicated, Jesus being first and the correlation there. And so I wanted to see what might happen if we put Jesus first, could our lives be less complicated? And the answer was an astounding yes. And then what does that look like on a daily basis?

SHEILA: Which is what I really appreciate about this book. It's not just we should be doing this, it is a walk through how do we do this? Take us back a little bit to your life when you were younger. Were you brought up in a Christian home?

LISA: Yes. Brought up in a Christian home, a pastor's home.

SHEILA: Aah! PK!

LISA: I know what they say about PK's!

[Laughter]

Yeah, brought up in a pastor's home. I loved my life. My life was good. It was that sort of simple life. At least I felt like it was on many levels running around chasing kittens. We usually lived remotely. My dad liked to live on land. I think because he was in the church and around people all the time he longed for that sort of respite. And so we usually lived out on some land. So chasing kittens around, a tree house; I loved that life. And so when I think back on that I think about peace, and I think about simplicity. I know I can't go back to that. And I know that there were problems then. I think we idealize that sometimes, right?

SHEILA: But one of the things I think is interesting is you talk about a point where you felt you were living a double life and needed to kind of confess that to your parents, which is a very difficult thing to do at that age.

LISA: It is difficult to do. I was a sophomore in college. It is particularly difficult to do when you have a mother like I have who is incredible, and godly, and in many ways, we have very different personalities. So she is soft and sweet. I like to think I'm sweet, but she is a different kind--a different kind of woman that I deeply admire. But it's hard to confess things like hey, I've been kind of living a double life. I've been this party girl in college.

The Lord had worked in my life a lot that sophomore year but that freshman year I'd really gone off the rails. So there were some things that the Lord was dealing with me that I needed to come clean about. I didn't want to do it, Sheila. I wanted to continue the facade, but it was clear that it was time. That in order for my life to be all that God wanted it to be, I needed to come clean. And I was at the point where I was tired of being sick. I was tired of the games. I longed to be free more than I longed to have secrets from

the people that I loved and had lied to and had sort of pulled the wool over their eyes for a while.

So in the middle of the night, it was a snowy night, I drove home from college and confessed to my mother.

SHEILA: Wow! How did your mom respond?

LISA: Oh wow. Well, I had prayed, first of all, on the way there that my father wouldn't wake up.

[Laughter]

That's the truth! Because I wanted to tell my mom first. We had that kind of relationship and I needed to tell her first. And he didn't wake up, which was interesting. Because that would be jarring, your child waking you up in the middle of the night. Now that I'm a parent, I can't imagine. But she woke up almost as if she was waiting on me to tell her something, which I know was the Lord. Came out to the car. We went out to the car, and I told her some things that I needed to tell her. She was gracious and she said, "I just wish that I had been there with you and for you."

SHEILA: Wow! What a beautiful response.

LISA: Yes, it was.

SHEILA: Do you think there was a healing power in confession like that? Because I think of a number of people. I get letters from some of our viewers who live with secrets and think well, I'm not like that now so I can move on. But I wonder how much of a hold they still have when you're not able to confess it out loud.

LISA: I believe that's true. And I believe confession makes you well. I believe there are

just some places you can't move to, Sheila, until you experience that. I think you and the Lord know what those are. I think that's something private that he reveals to you. I think for me, I certainly knew that because there had been some deceit that involved my parents, I knew that I needed to confess to my parents in order to move on. When I look back now, I really believe that might have been one of the first *Jesus Over Everything* decisions that I made.

SHEILA: Because in your book you talk about “Honesty Over Hiding” and I think that's huge. It will be different for all of us. For me, it was confessing that I was not okay; that I was falling apart; that I had contemplated suicide. It was all those things. And somehow, when you shine the light of Christ into those dark places, I kind of feel like the enemy loses ground.

LISA: Absolutely. Because he terrorizes us with those secrets. He continues to prod us every single day, and says, well, if they knew. Or if everyone knew. Or you know. And so we live with those secrets and they make us sick. And they make us unable to move on with certain things in our life because we're constantly hounded by these things.

So I think it is a hugely important part of our process. That chapter, "Honesty Over Hiding" is important because it is a *Jesus Over Everything* decision. Honesty makes us well, and truth is something that is obviously talked about in the Word all the time. He is the truth. And so it's very, very important. It is a *Jesus Over Everything* decision that we make daily, I believe.

SHEILA: You've got great steps in this book. And the other one that I felt was a fascinating one, "Holiness Over Freedom." Unpack that because that's an interesting title.

LISA: Well, it's the chapter in the book, Sheila, that I wanted to write the least. It is the last chapter in the book that I wrote because it was a tough one to write. I knew that it would be hard for maybe us to digest as believers; it is hard for me in many ways but so important. And ironically, it's the chapter that's resonated with folks the very most.

SHEILA: I'm not surprised.

LISA: Here's why it's so important: Because we want freedom, and we crave it so much. But in the process of our choosing our own freedoms, we believe that we can make our own lives free, we're actually becoming enslaved by the choices that we're free to make.

SHEILA: Wow! Interesting.

LISA: So what I talk about in that chapter is the choice for holiness which, by the way, is a lifelong journey, I believe. But it is formed by our daily choices. The choice for holiness is really choosing God's way and it will provide for us the greatest measure of freedom we'll ever know.

SHEILA: "Steady Over Hype" We live in a hype culture. What do you mean by "Steady Over Hype"?

LISA: Well, you know steadiness, faithfulness—yeah, that's the call to every believer. That's not a Lisa Whittle idea, that's in the Word; that's a Bible idea, and it is so important in this day and time. I think how that relates to us and how that affects us is in a very profound way because if we think about society, if we think about social media, if we think about how hype—I call it hype but we can call it emotions that run high, bandwagon, getting on the societal trends and so forth—it just affects us in such a profound way because if we are about that, we really might speak out of turn. We might struggle with relationships.

But the steadiness of a believer is to be faithful to the Word, is to be faithful to what God has called us to do. And that is what we need in this day and time more than ever.

SHEILA: Your whole title, *Jesus Over Everything* really resonated with me because some days I find social media quite a challenge. I find myself, not so much these days,

but like going through Instagram and there is a bunch of friends I know and they're all at something and I'm thinking, I wonder why they didn't ask me to go. And there is something about, it's kind of a siren call, as opposed to being faithful to the Lord, and being who God has created you to be and taking the next step. Do you ever struggle with that?

LISA: Absolutely. And when you said that it reminded me of what I write about in chapter one, which is called "The Land of the Deadly Overs." I attack that first. Because our lives are complicated, Sheila we come up with our methods and our ways of trying to uncomplicate our lives. We get into these behaviors, which I call "the deadly overs" which are things like over-apologizing, over-analyzing, overworking, overindulging, things like that. And over-analyzing is something I've struggled with a lot.

When you talk about why didn't I get invited to this? Or why didn't someone text me back? Or these things that sound silly, but these things can eat our lunch for days and days and days because we over-analyze, and we overthink. What we think is, I need to control this situation right now. Or this relationship feels complicated so let me uncomplicate it by over-apologizing for why I didn't come to someone's party. But what really happens is, as we well know, we complicate it more.

And so putting Jesus over our relationships, putting Jesus over that fracture that's there between us and someone else, trusting that he is enough, trusting that he can help us have the wisdom to be able to know when to speak and when not to speak out on social media and things like that, those things are so important.

SHEILA: How did 2020 hit you just as a woman, as a follower of Christ, as a mother, what was that like for you?

LISA: I think like a lot of us it made me stop and evaluate. It made me evaluate what am I doing that matters? Am I living out the gospel in a way that makes a difference? How am I resting? How am I taking care of people that I love? And what do I want to be doing

to be found faithful to the Lord? Certainly I think there was a weariness that came over me. That's real. And for the first time, Sheila, I experienced something that I don't typically experience because I'm an introvert.

SHEILA: Oh, me too!

LISA: Are you?

SHEILA: Yes!

LISA: Well, I experienced something and maybe you did too. I experienced loneliness.

SHEILA: Yes.

LISA: I don't typically. I can be in my home for a very long time and not feel lonely as an introvert but for the first time, I felt lonely. Maybe not for the first time, but certainly I felt lonely in a different way.

SHEILA: I found myself having to ask the Holy Spirit, how do I live in these days? Because I had like 30 events that were canceled, all the things that we usually go do. And I found myself kind of spiraling a little and thinking, like Lord, how do I live in a way that is honoring to you when everything I do has been taken away and it's just us? But I think for me it was a really good thing. It reminded me, like the message of your book, *Jesus Over Everything*, that you can even put Christian ministry in the place of where Jesus should be.

LISA: One hundred percent. I think it did that for a lot of folks that serve Jesus in one way or another. It caused us to pause. And when you're so busy serving Jesus, whatever you're doing, you can get in such a routine and you can get into such habits and they can even be good habits but when you have to pause, and you have to stop, you have to look inside yourself and sometimes that's uncomfortable. But it's important. You know that

book came out a day before we went under lockdown.

SHEILA: Oh gosh! Don't you just love that?

LISA: It was like Lord, what is going on? But what was going on was: is Jesus going to be over everything even in a pandemic? Is he going to be over having to stay home, having to readjust your life? Do you believe what you wrote? I was faced with those things. I was very glad, I have to tell you, Sheila, I was very glad to have written a book that I could stand behind in those moments.

End of video

In the studio

SHEILA: So good! It is interesting too, I've often shared that experience where you put a year's worth of research and prayer and study and work into writing a book sometimes not even realizing that the Lord's going to use that very book to speak to you. That was Lisa's experience with that. And often, that has been my experience, too with things I have written.

But I want to just pause for a moment and follow up on what Lisa was saying because I don't know exactly what you're facing right now, you might be in a time where you're struggling in your marriage, and you just can't see any hope. Maybe you're dealing with a chronic illness and that's, and I often wonder, those of you who do struggle with chronic illnesses, how hard that must be to get up every day and keep believing and keep hoping. Or perhaps you're worried about a child who's wandered off and you're thinking Lord, what did I do wrong?

The thing that I'm grateful about that Lisa reminds us about in her book, and I'm going to tell you how you can get your own copy of this book, you'll love it, is that no matter what you and I face, today or tomorrow or next week or next month, Jesus is already there.

There is nothing that you and I will face that he has not already present. I love that. And

that last chapter of Hebrews, Hebrews 13, I believe, where it says "Never will I leave you. No, never will I forsake you."

And sometimes, when we find ourselves in challenging days, the temptation is to try and fix it ourselves or find a way out of it. What Lisa reminded us of, and I enjoyed it again today is really, when we put *Jesus Over Everything* then there is a peace that comes, not from getting answers always, but from his presence.

One of the ways that his presence impacts our lives is it is as if Christ washes our eyes again and unstops our ears and we see people where they're really hurting and where there is a real need, and where you and I get to be a real answer. So I want you to watch this and then I'm going to tell you how you can get a copy of Lisa's book for yourself. Please, watch this.

On the mission field

ANNOUNCER: Mothers everywhere want the best for their children. They want them to grow up happy and healthy. Tooch, a young Cambodian mother wants the same thing for her two younger children. But something as basic as providing them water to drink has potential their happiness because the water in Tooch's village is diseased.

Open Captions

>> I had three children, but my daughter died. She had severe diarrhea after drinking this water and just yesterday I had to take my son to the clinic. I'm scared that he will die also. I loved to hug my daughter every day. But now I can't, and my heart is broken.

ANNOUNCER: No mother should ever have to bury a child simply because they don't have clean water to give them. But clean water can change everything for mothers like Tooch.

Open Captions

>> I would be so happy if our village could get clean drinking water.

End of video

In the studio

SHEILA: I can't imagine as a mother what that is like. You know so often on these trips, one thing becomes crystal clear to me, you and I go through different things in our day. You might go through a season where you're sick for a little bit and then you got better. Or you're worried about something and then you get relief. But day after day after day after day after day, these moms in these nations where we work wake up to the same reality that they have no choice—no choice between giving their child this contaminated water or literally there is nothing that they can give them.

To watch a child die of the ravages of not being able to have any liquid is a devastating, painful death. But it is kind of like what do I do? When you've already lost a child and then you watch another child begin to fade like that? It is devastating. What I feel is, while you and I are on this planet—it is not an accident that you're on this earth at this point in human history. It is not an accident that I'm here. It is not an accident that God picked me up from a little fishing village in Scotland and just scooted me across the ocean and sat me down here to remind you that this is going on right now. But the great news is we can be an answer to those prayers.

It is our commitment here at *LIFE* this year to drill 350 brand-new wells in over 20 nations. Now that might seem like an overwhelming thing but here's how we do it. We break it down into bite-sized doable pieces. So here's what I'd like to ask you, could you contribute \$48 today? If you could that will give clean drinking water to ten people. If you could give \$144 today that would give clean drinking water to 30 people.

Perhaps you're in a business and God has blessed your business or you've come into some money unexpectedly or you've been waiting to see what God might want you to do with a certain amount of money, would you be able to drill a brand-new well yourself? You

know that is \$4800. That's astronomical to some, but to others, perhaps to you, that is doable.

Can you imagine the eternal glory of that? We can go out and buy a new car, a new pair of shoes. We're leaving all of that stuff behind, people, when we get out of here. But what we're not leaving behind, prayerfully, is the people who we have reached. Because we don't just give them Water for LIFE, we tell them about the Jesus who is water—living water! Because to me, when you knock that dirty water out of their hands, and you put clean water into their hands, you've earned the right to tell them about the one who sent us—and his name is Jesus.

So please, would you go to your phone right now? Would you just give today right now the very best gift you can? And together, we're going to spread the good news of the hope of Jesus around the world. Please call now.

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. And remember, for any gift at all, request your copy of *Jesus Over Everything* by Lisa Whittle. It's a great book! You'll really, really enjoy it.

But we've lots of gifts we'd love to send to you. I know you don't give for that, but it is just our way of saying thank you. And it is a way of reminding you as you look at the beautiful bronze or have your coffee in these lovely mugs, it will remind you to pray for this ministry. And I want you to know as you're praying for us, we're praying for you. So see you next time!