

2/22/23

Week nine: WFL

Sheila Walsh

"The Bummer Lamb"

**In the studio**

**SHEILA:** Hello! Welcome to *LIFE Today*. I'm Sheila Walsh and this is going to be a tougher show for me to do. This is actually my last taping here at *LIFE*.

I've had the God-given privilege for almost seven years of sitting beside James and Betty or sitting with Randy or just sitting here on my set and teaching, and just sharing the goodness of God, and the things that the Lord has done in my life. And so when I was thinking about what show I should do as I take my last program, I thought, I think we should go right back to the very beginning when I started here at *LIFE*. And I warn you, I look a wee bit different. My hair is totally different.

But it was just one of those moments when I felt as if I wanted to unpack my heart and just to let you see, the goodness of God in broken places. Because I think sometimes when we see people on television and someone's been kind enough to do their makeup and their hair, or make sure you look okay, look like we have all our ducks in a row, well, I lost all my ducks many years ago. I just wanted you to know that no matter what place you find yourself in today, whether you feel as if you're broken, that you don't have much to offer, maybe you've been told all sorts of negative things throughout your life and you've worn those labels for years, I understand that.

Growing up as a scared young girl, I never imagined for a moment that God would take me around the world to so many places talking about his goodness. Because honestly, I'm the least likely person. I walked in my sleep until I was almost 18 years old. And so often, I would have devastating nightmares in the middle of the night and wake up just

terrified. And yet, here's what I know now. If you're a mom, if you're a single mom bringing up children, I want to encourage you, because after my father's death by suicide, my mom had to raise three children who are all under the age of seven, and she had to do it on very little money. But my mom believed that God is bigger than our circumstances and he can find the most lost and broken little lamb and carry them home. Watch this.

### **Begin video clip**

I grew up on the west coast of Scotland. If you've ever been to Scotland one of the first things you notice as your plane is beginning to descend either in Glasgow or in Edinburgh is all around you just see field after field of these beautiful, very white sheep—so white because it is always raining.

One of the things I loved about growing up in that community was I loved when the spring lambs were born. There's something so beautiful about watching these little baby lambs being born. Initially, they're so fragile but within moments they're bouncing across the field.

But something happens in that community and shepherds have not been able to work out why or been able to change it. And it is not just in Scotland, you can do a little research, it happens all around the world. Every now and then, a mother will give birth to a lamb and immediately reject it. Now the shepherd can try to move that lamb back beside the mother, but the mother will simply kick the lamb away. If the shepherd doesn't intervene then that little lamb will die, not of hunger but actually of a broken spirit.

So what the shepherd will do, they're called "bummer lambs"— called just "little bummer lambs." What the shepherd will do is he will take that lamb into his home, and he'll care for it. He'll keep it warm by the fire and feed it with a bottle. And at some point, during each day, he will hold that little one close to his heart so that the lamb can hear a heartbeat. Now once the lamb is strong and able to kind of stand on its own feet the shepherd will reintroduce the lamb to the flock.

This is the part that I loved watching as a child. In the morning, the shepherd will come out and stand at the edge of the field and he'll call out, "Sheep! Sheep! Sheep!" And the very first ones to run to him are the bummer lambs because they know his voice.

I want to tell you a story about how that became very real to me. Two of my favorite verses in the book of Romans; I love the book of Romans, chapter eight in particular. You can't get much better than beginning with "no condemnation" and ending with "no separation." That's a pretty great deal. But these two verses in particular, Romans 8:38 and 39 say this: *And I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from God's love; neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither our fears for today nor our worries about tomorrow, not even the powers of hell can separate us from God's love; no power in the sky above or the earth below. Indeed nothing—nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

I've known that verse since I was a little girl, but I want to tell you today how God moved me from knowing the words to understanding the profound truth.

When I was five years old, my father had a massive brain injury and he went from being this loving, wonderful dad to this very confused, angry, and ultimately, violent stranger.

And the last day I ever saw my father alive was turning in time to see him about to bring his cane down on my skull. I don't know whether I pulled it from him or whether I pushed him but all I remember is he hit the ground hard and just lay there roaring like an animal.

Well, my mom had been in the kitchen. When she heard what was happening, she came in and got my brother and sister and I and locked us in a room while she dialed 911. Now we lived in a small town, it was a small fishing town. I don't think it would have been more than five minutes before help arrived, but it felt like an eternity. And eventually, it took four men to carry my father out of the house that day.

He was 34 years old, and he was taken to what was called Ayrshire Lunatic Asylum—a horrible place. Because he had become violent, he was placed in the maximum-security ward, and all the other men in there were men in their 70s and 80s who had completely lost touch with reality.

So my mom asked, "Would it be possible to move Frank to a unit with some younger men?"

Well, they did; but it was a less secure unit, and that very first night my father escaped. They searched for him all through the night. Eventually, they found him in the morning. He had drowned himself in the river, and he was caught in the salmon nets.

In those days in Scotland, you didn't take children to funerals or a graveside. All I knew is that my mom came home in a black dress with a black hat on and took every picture of my father off the walls and off the tables, and she placed them carefully in a little suitcase which she locked and pushed under her bed. And we never mentioned him again.

I think we know so much more nowadays about how to help children process grief. I think she thought if Sheila wants to talk, she'll talk. She had no way of knowing the conversation that was going on inside my head, because there was no one left on this earth who could answer the one question I needed an answer to, and that was, what did my dad see in me that made him hate me so much in the end?

Children—if you have kids, you'll know this—children are the best collectors of information. They miss nothing, but they are the poorest interpreters of that information. I grew up with what I call a profound sense of shame.

Here's how I differentiate between shame and guilt. I think guilt tells me I've done something wrong. But shame—shame tells you, you are something wrong. What do you do with that? You find a place to hide. You find some kind of mask to make it possible to

go on. Sometimes people will use drugs or alcohol. Sometimes people will use medication or even spend money. They think if I look better on the outside I might feel better on the inside.

I found the perfect place to hide—Christian ministry. Think about it. Who is going to come up to me and say, "Put that Bible down or we're going to have an intervention!" Not likely. But God's the only one who knows whether we're serving out of pain or passion for him. So I went to seminary. I eventually came to America, and I ended up as the co-host of the 700 Club with Dr. Pat Robertson. Here's the truth. Inside I was still the same scared little girl who wouldn't let anybody get close to her in case you saw what my dad saw.

Do you know it's possible to be very well-known and profoundly lonely? That's the amazing thing about the mercy of God. Jesus said, "I've come to give you life," not just survival, not just getting through one more day. "I've come to give you life." But sometimes his rescue plan is something we would never sign up for.

At almost the same age as my dad, I'm interviewing a guest one day, and I ask my first question and they don't answer the question. They turn the tables and say, "You know, Sheila you sit here every day asking us how we're doing. How are you doing?"

She meant it kindly, but I wasn't ready for it. I didn't have time to pull up that wall and I did something I hadn't done in years: I started to cry and I couldn't stop. The TV guys, and the camera guys were embarrassed, and the studio audience was embarrassed. Eventually, they threw us to a commercial break, and I walked off the set and locked myself in my dressing room. And as far as I was concerned my life was over.

If you've spent your whole life trying to prove to people that you've got it all together and you end up in a place that says you've definitely fallen apart, what do you do? So I called a friend of mine, a guy called Dr. Henry Cloud. And I said, "Henry, I think I'm losing my

mind."

He said, "No, you're not but you need some help. And you need it quickly."

So I went from literally being the co-host of the 700 Club in the morning and by that evening, I was in a locked ward of a psychiatric hospital. But you know what I've discovered about the relentless mercy and love of God? Sometimes he'll take you to a prison to set you free.

I remember the first day the psychiatrist asked me my name. I thought oh, this is a trick question. I remember my name. So I said, "Sheila Walsh."

He said, "No, no, Sheila. I know your name. I said, 'Who are you?'"

I said, "I'm the co-host of the 700 Club."

He said, "No, I didn't ask you what you do. I asked, 'Who are you?'"

I said, "I have no idea."

He said, "I know that, and that's why you're here."

And honestly, that began one of the most profound journeys of my life to discover that my worth is not based on anything I bring to the table, it is based on God's love for me.

I remember after I'd been there three weeks, I was given a pass and they said, "You can go to a movie or you can go to a mall. We'll send a young nurse with you."

I said, "No, I'd just like to go to church. I don't care which denomination. If it's a Bible-believing church, I'll go there."

I remember I sat in the very back row, and I felt so lost. But the preacher, I don't remember his whole sermon but at the end, he said, "Some of you in here feel as if you're dead inside. You can almost hear them begin to heap the ashes on top of your casket." He said, "But I want you to know something. Jesus is here. And you don't even have to get yourself out of that hole. You just have to call on his name, and he will reach in and grab hold of you and pull you free."

I had no idea what the protocol of that church was. But I ran to the front, and I lay face down in front of the cross. What kept coming back to me were the words of a hymn my grandmother used to sing to me when I was just a little girl. The hymn is "Rock of Ages" with these two lines: Nothing in my hands I bring, simply to thy cross I cling.

And I finally got it. I am not the good news. Jesus is! I find the story of the bummer lamb very applicable. It is interesting when the shepherd goes out in the field in the morning and he calls, "Sheep! Sheep! Sheep!" The bummer lambs run to him because they know his voice. Does the shepherd love the bummer lambs more? No. They just actually dare to believe it. I will be a bummer lamb until the day I see Jesus, face to face, but it is not the bad news, it is the good news.

Do you remember what Jesus said? We find it in John's gospel; John chapter 10. It is how he identifies himself. Here's what he says: *"I tell you the truth. Anyone who sneaks over the wall of a sheepfold rather than going through the gate must surely be a thief or a robber. But the one who enters through the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep recognize his voice and come to him. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. After he has gathered his own flock, he walks ahead of them, and they follow him because they know his voice."*

I don't know what your story is. I don't know what you feel you have to hide. I don't know what you're using to hide behind. But I want you to know that God loves you exactly as you are right now. Some days you're tempted to think, well, I used to love the

Lord. I used to be very involved in church but there are some things in my life that aren't good and once I get my act cleaned up then I'll be right back. No! Don't do that. Come as you are. Let God clean you up. You don't have to clean your own act up. You're loved just the way you are.

I would never have signed up for any kind of journey through mental illness but honestly today, I'm grateful. I'll tell you why. Because it means I can look in the eyes of somebody else who is suffering and say, "Me too."

Don't be ashamed of your story. Don't hide who you are. Don't wait until you get it all together. Recognize the beauty of being a bummer lamb. Does God love his bummer lambs like me more than he loves everybody else? Nope. We just actually dare to believe it. When you come clean, when you're transparent and at that moment when you feel the most broken you've ever felt, you feel a smile of the Father on you, it's the best thing on earth! His love for us is not based on what we got right. It's based on his son Jesus who has made every single one of us right.

**End of video**

**In the studio**

**SHEILA:** I love that the Father's love is based on the righteousness of Christ. And for me, that's the whole story. If I had one story to tell for the rest of my life, that's it. That every single one of us is broken, we're all lost and that's why Jesus came.

I don't know where you find yourself in your life right at this moment, but if you don't have a personal relationship with Jesus, because that's what makes us right, it's not going to church, it's not owning a Bible, it's none of those things. Those are all good things but the only way that we are connected to the Father is through Jesus.

And I've had letters from all sorts of people, from all walks of life. I know that many people from prison watch our program too, and I just to want to say to you, if you have



never asked Jesus to take over your life, if you've never given him control, you can do that right now. A simple prayer, no special words, you just have to admit, Jesus, I know I'm a sinner. I know I'm lost, and I want to be forgiven. I believe that you're the son of God. I believe that you died, and you rose again. And right now, I just want to say I'm all in. I want to be your lamb. I want to follow you for the rest of my life.

The amazing thing is when you pray a prayer as simple as that, immediately your life just changed. Your name has now been written in the Lamb's Book of Life! This means that you're home-free! It doesn't mean that your life will be easy, but it promises you'll never be alone.

It took me many, many years to come to that realization that the Father is smiling on us when we come in Jesus' name. And maybe you found yourself kind of wandering away a little bit. I love the fact that you can read it in Luke's gospel, Luke chapter 15, Jesus tells the story of lost things: A lost coin, a lost boy, and a lost sheep. And maybe you've been wandering for a while, and you just—it's time to come home. Well, I want you to know the shepherd is out there looking for you.

And I love that Jesus said that when the shepherd finds that lost lamb, he picks it up. He doesn't say to it, why were you out there? What were you doing? What were you thinking? No! He carries that lamb home and celebrates. So I'm not sure what your life is like at the moment, but I want you to know you are loved by Jesus Christ, and you are loved by God the Father. And you get to be loved as a little bummer lamb.

I've met so many amazing people in my years here at *LIFE* and one of the greatest privileges has been setting foot in so many nations where their needs are very, very real and their prayers are very, very simple. And you and I get to be an answer to those prayers. Would you watch this?

**On the mission field**

**SHEILA:** I've just visited the graveside of a nine-month-old baby boy. I'm standing right beside his killer. It was water from this exact well that this darling boy is now getting his water from. It is a hand-dug well. It's not very deep and the water is filthy. Mosquitoes lay their eggs in there. Children get malaria; they get diarrhea.

This little one, this nine-month-old boy died with diarrhea. The mom took him to the clinic to see if he could get some medicine. They gave him medicine but by that point he was so sick he couldn't even take the medicine. He vomited it up again and died in her arms.

It's unthinkable! I would never ever let a child of mine drink this, but they have no choice! The need is urgent. I've never felt such a sense of despair at visiting four children's graves and I've been here three days. And I've asked mothers, "What do you do when you lose a child?" And every single one of them said, "We are just simply praying. We pray to God that he will send help."

Well, here we are. We are the help. You and I are the help. So please help us change the world. This is their normal—they need a *new normal* where for the first time in their lives they drink clean, fresh, life-giving water.

**End of video**

**In the studio**

**SHEILA:** It's not complicated is it? It's not as if we're trying to reinvent something. All they're asking for is clean water. See, so often it is the children who die because they're little and they haven't built up good resources. Often, they don't have very nourishing food anyway and so when contaminated water is in their system, they just don't have what it would take to be able to battle through that to a place where they're strong again. And to watch these little ones literally disappear before their mother's eyes, it's devastating.

I'll never forget that one woman that I was walking with in that piece, her name was Merci. And she took me and she took Janice, our photographer, and we walked to where her little one was buried. What do you say? What do you say to a mom who loved her little one, and then the little one is buried just a short distance from where she lays her head down every single night wondering tomorrow, will it be someone else? Will it be another one of my children?

You and I, see, I've often seen things on television where they'll talk about solutions and I think to myself, that sounds amazing. I wonder if it really works. Well, let me tell you, I know without a shadow of a doubt, hand on my heart before the Lord, this works! And our prayer is that this year, we'll be able to drill 350 brand-new wells in over 20 nations so that moms like that don't have to give children the very thing that they know could kill them.

So here's how we're going to do it if we work together. If you can give \$48 that would provide clean drinking water for ten. \$144, could you do that? That will provide clean drinking water for 30. And if you are able, perhaps you could get together with your Bible study group or your Sunday School or your business and determine together we're going to drill a well, that's \$4800, and that provides clean drinking water for about thousand people—like a for a whole village for their whole life. That's why we call it for water for *LIFE*. Because when with we go in we drill down deep so that the water is clean, sparkling, fresh, so that mothers don't have to bury their children anymore.

So please, the need is urgent right now! So I'm asking, would you call that number on your screen? Just dial that number, give the very best gift you can. If you do what you can do and if I do what I can do then together we can be the very answer to prayers that are being prayed right at this minute. I know that right at this minute there are moms on their knees in those countries saying, "Father, please answer my prayer."

Let's hear their cry and let's be the answer. Please, go to your phone, give the very best gift you can.

**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! Please keep calling. Let's do this. And can I just say

thank you? Thank you for inviting me into your home. Thank you for the trust you place.

Can I say one other thing? You know you see some of us on camera, you'll see James and Betty whom you love, and you'll see Randy, and now the girl who is stepping into my place, Tammy Trent, who is just amazing, you'll love her. I just want you to know, this ministry is real. Please continue to support the ministry of *LIFE Outreach*. You're making an eternal difference and it's been my joy and privilege to be a part of it.

So thank you. Thank you so much for your support and your love and your encouragement. I pray God's richest blessing on you, in Jesus' name. Amen!