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GOOD MORNING – Bobby Schuller (BS) and Hannah Schuller (HS)

BS: This is the day the Lord has made. We will rejoice and be glad in it. Good morning!

HS: Welcome, church family. You are the beloved of God. Thank you for being here today. We love you. You know something I've discovered about the Bible over my years of being a Christian is the Bible is a cheat sheet to have the best life now. Not that we're not going to go through trials but the Bible helps us navigate that. And if you think about it, God knows the way the world works better than anybody, and He wants us to have the fullest life possible. Shake the hand of the person next to you, or give them a high five, and say God loves you and so do I.

BS: So Lord, we thank you that you've called us here to this celebration of the resurrection. We thank you, God, that your Holy Spirit dwells in this space. And Lord, I pray that every empty heart here would be full of joy, full of your Holy Spirit, full of knowledge, of wisdom and life. Lord, we love you, it's in Jesus' name we pray, amen.

HS: Amen.

SCRIPTURE – John 15:1-9 – Hannah Schuller

In preparation for Bobby's message, the words of our Lord found in John 15:1:

I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit He prunes so that it will be even more fruitful.

You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.

I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. If you do not remain in me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned.

If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.

As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love.

God wants to be with us, church, and with Him is the most wonderful, joyful place to be. Amen.

INTERVIEW – with Mike McHargue (MM) – Bobby Schuller (BS)

BS: Well joining us today is Mike McHargue. Hi Mike. The problem is I always know him as Science Mike, and that's, I think, how most people know you. Science Mike is well known for his Ask Science Mike and The Liturgist podcasts, and Mike, it's so good to have you here today. Would you welcome with me Mike McHargue? Hi.

So let's just start there. Why do people call you Science Mike?

MM: I think McHargue is so hard to say and spell that the internet needed another moniker. And it's a little misleading because you hear Science Mike and you think scientist, and unfortunately I am not actually a scientist, although I did go to community college for six amazing weeks.

BS: Yes.

MM: My work instead has been about helping people who come from faith backgrounds learning to understand how science can broaden and expand our view of the world, and also to help people who come from scientific backgrounds understand what faith means to people and why it's a relevant and indeed necessary force in human society.

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BS: It's funny because science and Christianity, in particular, have always had a sort of dance, haven't they. There's been this two and fro where either Christianity has been like a big supporter of science; I think of the Jesuits, for example, Presbyterians, building universities, hospitals, but then sometimes it also becomes this very reactive like well hey, your scientific discovery doesn't quite line up with our theological view of the world. And of course that happened with Copernicus and Galileo, both of whom were, dedicated Christians, but they were also great scientists. And so it's interesting, isn't it, how that happens.

MM: Yes, I think so often we become intimidated by science because it does make demands on how we view the world. But I think for the person of faith, it's important to understand just like you wouldn't use a hammer to fix a leak in the sink, you want to grab the right tool for the job when you're evaluating knowledge about our world, and I see science as an incredible way to reveal the beauty and mystery of the natural world as it was created.

BS: And just like any other faith, there's so many Christians who are sort of on a spectrum, aren't there. I mean, I remember one of the best experiences I ever had was when I was at BioLogos, which is a group of Christian scientists and theologians who get together to sort of talk about this relationship between science and theology. I remember looking in this room, and it was in New York City at the Harvard Club, actually, and there was these professors of cosmology and bio-science, from Calvin, Harvard, MIT, Cambridge, and they're like raising their hands and worshipping Jesus. And it was this very interesting thing to see these respected scientists that were also deeply spiritual people and loved Jesus. And I think you're kind of helping the world see that, aren't you. You want the world to see that.

MM: That's my goal, honestly. I think so often this kind of cultural war between a scientific understanding of the world and people who view the world through a lens of Christology, or what Christ does in the world, we lose so much. Christians care about feeding the hungry, and caring for the poor, and in fact science can be our greatest ally in those efforts.

So my goal is to help people of faith understand science better, and of course also for scientists who are like 'wait, why do you go on a Sunday morning every week' to understand why that's so significant, and indeed healthy for the brain.

BS: Yes, that's great. So you have this awesome book that just came out Finding God in the Waves. So why did you write this book and kind of how have you gotten here?

MM: Well I grew up in the church, and so as much as I love science, I was the kid in Sunday school asking but what about the dinosaurs on the ark, right? So as I grew through that whole experience, at some point I got really serious about studying the Bible and I actually read it four times in a single year. And at the end of that process, I was an atheist because I wasn't equipped for what I viewed as conflict between science and scripture. So I wrote a book for the literally millions of Americans who struggle to reconcile how science describes the world in a Christian worldview because they so often feel alone.

But I also wrote the book for people who are in loving relationships with people in faith transition or doubt, so that they can better understand that journey and have better conversations, and ultimately create a world that's more open for people to return to God.

BS: I often feel bad for.. it seems so unfair that there's usually, when a scientific discovery, there's usually like these early speakers from the church, a handful of pastors who oftentimes will set the tone for what a lot of believers think is the right answer, when it oftentimes is the wrong. Like there's a lot of ironies, like the guy who discovered the big bang theory is a Belgian priest.

MM: Right.

BS: Who when he first made the discovery was criticized; scientists criticized the big bang theory mainly because they said it was too creationistic.

MM: Right.

BS: And then when it was adapted, I think, in the 60's, it went the other way where they were like ha, ha! See there's no God because of a big bang rather than just being like the big bang is the way God created the universe, or whatever.

MM: Right, right.

BS: And that's the hard thing, it's the children, isn't it. When the children are given these ideas, they're like I have to choose either or, we don't really set them up well to be strong believers in Jesus if we give them those either/or questions, I think.

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MM: So I think there's this opportunity, for example with the big bang, if we imagine the universe emerging from this mysterious singularity the size of the sugar cube, and to everything that is, what more speaks of beauty and majesty in creation than that.

BS: And you can even see the word in DNA and things like that, you can see code, like God speaking these things into being.

MM: Exactly.

BS: It's so creative and powerful, so. Well that's great. Science Mike, thank you so much and the book is awesome. It's called Finding God in the Waves, and I really want to recommend you take a look at this book and check out the podcast, too: Science Mike and The Liturgist. Thank you so much, sir, we appreciate you. God bless you.

DECLARATION – Bobby Schuller

Friends, would you hold your hands out like this as a way of receiving from God. Let's say this together: I'm not what I do. I'm not what I have. I'm not what people say about me. I am the beloved of God. It's who I am. No one can take it from me. I don't have to worry, I don't have to hurry, I can trust my friend Jesus and share His love with the world.

MESSAGE – Bobby Schuller "How to Spend Time with Jesus"

Well we're in this series, we call it DIY – do it yourself: No One Can Follow Jesus for You. And a lot of this was inspired by the five hundred year anniversary of the Reformation, where many Christian believers said look, I can't have some priest know Jesus for me, and then I just kind of trust that, but I need to know Him personally.

And so we wanted to put together a series where we talk about the basics for everyday believers. Maybe you're a new Christian. We wanted to talk about the basics of how to live a daily Christian life. And I think today is maybe one of the most important sermons, probably the most important sermon in the series. And today is basically how do I connect with God. How do I utilize certain spiritual disciplines that help me really get a sense that God is with me. How do I, like as Jesus says in John 10, hear the voice of the Shepherd in my daily life? How do I become the kind of person that as I'm walking, I'm abiding in the vine and full of joy, full of vision, knowledge, wisdom from on high. How do I become that kind of person?

And so today, I'm going to talk about four.. there's tons of disciplines, but I'm going to talk about four disciplines that really work, and they work well for me. And if you implement these disciplines, say ten/fifteen minutes a day, I mean it doesn't really take a lot, you'll see a dramatic change in your experience of your life with God.

So today we're going to talk about abiding in the vine, and the last thing I want you to do is be like oh gosh, I haven't prayed in a while. I haven't read my Bible in awhile. The last thing we want is shame or guilt. And let me just say, I mean I'm a pastor and all, but even as I was putting this together, for me it's like you go in waves, right? There's times where you're really.. it's like going to the gym. Like there's times where you're like doing really good, and other times you'd be like oh my gosh, it's been a couple months, a couple years. And so don't feel shame, but rather as I was putting this together, and I hope you get this sense, it's like it's so worth it! It's fun! Its fulfilling, its joyful. It's certainly better than watching TV, unless you're watching now, just don't change the channel. But it gives you this sense of fulfillment in life. So don't feel guilty because even pastors; nobody's perfect at this. But rather, see it as a gift that's made available to you.

As a church in general, the church needs to be teaching these things more. Mainline Christian denominations across the board are shrinking rapidly. There's only two denominations or traditions and they're growing really rapidly. You know what they are?

Eastern Orthodoxy on one end, and Pentecostals and Mer Charismatic Christianity on the other. And although these two traditions seem very worlds apart, one's very institutional and is very old, and the other is very new and very low church, they have one thing in common and that's that, forgive me for using this word, they're very mystic. They want to go deeper than just a book. They want to have this personal experience with the Holy Spirit. That's why people are going to those traditions because they're not just scholars, they're people who are teaching everyday people how to hear from God! How to perform miracles. How to receive revelation. And I think that every tradition teaches these, but every tradition needs to teach them more. We need to show people how to experience God for themselves. It's one thing to tell people about God; it's another thing to introduce them to Him and that's what we want to do, right?

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So today we're going to talk about this. How do we become the kind of people that abide in the vine? Like the dude abides. Any Big Lebowski fans? I didn't feel like that went over but this idea of like abiding, remaining, being in a place of rest, even though everything's going crazy around you, you can be the kind of person that's deeply rooted in the Father; that you have this sort of ongoing connection, even when you sleep, even when you're doing accounting or stuck in traffic, that you have this ongoing connection with the Father that gives you a sense of awareness of His presence and a real sense of shalom peace, as you kind of live your life.

I remember when I started to have a radical transformation in my own personal walk with the Lord, I had made like a decision to become a Christian, but it was about a year later I went to this.. this is the 90's right? This big event called Teen Mania in Tulsa Oklahoma at the Mabee Center; it was filled with other teenagers. And of course they did the things that big youth events do: lights and lasers, and video and extreme Jesus. And when you're a teenager, that's cool, and it's actually like very helpful. But the really cool thing was.. the best thing they did, because it was like a Friday night and all day Saturday thing. When all these teens, we're talking like ten thousand, probably, teenagers sitting in a big stadium, that they sat around and for an hour this pastor, Ron Luce, taught them how to have a quiet time. Looking back, I think not only was that amazing. Can you imagine getting ten thousand teenagers to sit quietly and pray? Ten thousand teenagers and there's not any talking or anything. We didn't have cell phones back then. I can't imagine.

But anyway, he taught us how to pray and to trust that if we were going to do great things from God, it wasn't going to come from willpower. It wasn't going to come from trying harder. It wasn't even really going to come from studying, although that's important and worthwhile, but rather it would come from intimacy with the Father; from a deep, deep connection from your soul connected to heaven, and that if we could keep that, that we would have the power, even as teenagers, to do tremendously great things for God, and I still believe that. God loves using teenagers.

So that's what Jesus is talking about. It's right in the middle, and Hannah read it today, beautifully, John chapter 15. This is right in the heart of what's called Jesus' departure sermon. It's just before He's going to the cross. He's looking at His disciples, and He's talking to them about how to live, and He says, "I am the true vine and my Father is the gardener. He cuts every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit, He prunes so that it'll be even more fruitful."

And He says you're already clean because of the word I've spoken to you. "Remain in me as I remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself. It must remain in the vine." You need to hear that. Bearing fruit doesn't come trying harder, it doesn't come from willpower. It comes from abiding, from remaining in the spirit of God; from remaining in Jesus.

"Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me. I am the vine. You are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit. Apart from me, you can do nothing. If you do not remain in me, you're like a branch that is thrown away and withers. Such branches are picked up and thrown into the fire and burned. If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish and it will be done for you. This is to my Father's glory that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples. As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love." And later He goes on to say, and love one another. So this idea is that this word Menno means to abide. To abide. The word abide and abode have the same root. It's the idea that you make a home there; that you belong there. That you remain there. That you kick off your shoes, you take off your wet socks after walking through the snow, and you warm up by the fire. They're like this is where you are. That there is this ongoing never ending communion between you and the Father that fuels your decisions. That it gives you real spiritual power. That gives you vision, discernment, wisdom.

When Jesus is talking about the vine, of course, the vine has already been mentioned several times in the Old Testament. The vine is always Israel. You see God calling Israel the vine in Isaiah, Ezekiel, Hosea, Psalms. This idea that the vine is Israel and that sometimes it gets overgrown and wild, but when it is pruned, pruned and cut and disciplined, it actually bears fruit. And this is so important. First of all, the vine always alludes to one thing and one thing only – wine! It's always wine! And the reason that's.. like Jesus loved wine. He talks about it constantly through the Bible, and although we never see Jesus get drunk, He has a glass of wine with His meals, with outcasts. He was an Enophile. Really. He was the symatic Somalia. His first miracle was to turn water into wine at a wedding where they ran out of wine. And although alcoholism and drunkenness is not of God, wine is meant to invoke this idea of plenty, of celebration, of weddings, of dancing, of singing and merriment and holidays. That's what the reader is supposed to see when they see wine.

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And that's why He doesn't choose some other fruit or tree. He chooses a vine for a reason. Why does He want you to abide in Him? So that you'll be full of joy! Full of joy! Full of life! That smiling will come naturally. That even though the world is going nuts, and everybody's angry, and everybody is fighting, that you in that world have this ability to abide in the vine and bear fruit, and to spread joy, compassion, kindness, even when people disagree with you. Or even when people are offensive to you. That all you do is bear fruit, and that fruit is joy and love. You're just bearing it. It doesn't come from trying harder, it doesn't come from exhausting yourself or from willpower, it comes from being rooted in Him. This ongoing communion with heaven. So that's amazing.

So how do we remain in Him? How do we remain in Jesus? Well we're going to talk about that in a minute here. I find that our world is either one, most people, especially here in the U.S. are incredibly stressed out. Always worried. We get home exhausted. That's why we watch so much TV, we can't find energy to do anything else. I love the statistic that you only need six deep breaths a minute, but the average person, I just watched everybody go (BREATHS) who did that. I just watched like all these shoulders go up and down, that's funny. So you only need six deep breaths a minute, like it's the best way to breathe. The average person, though, breathes 12 breaths a minute, but even funnier, the average American breathes 18 times a minute. So the average American is like (BREATHES FAST) right? What's going on there? There is anxiety, stress, worry, fear, burning the candle at both ends. Hey, I love working hard. I love effort. But there's a desperateness for many of us where we just spin our wheels and undergirding that is a sort of emptiness or a void. And that's not what the Lord has for you. Work hard, achieve, do great things, succeed, but always do it from a place of abiding in the vine.

So you have one side that's like very stressed, feeling empty, driven, but there's a lot of emptiness under the surface. And then you've got this other group that this sort of.. I always think.. I call it the new age nihilism. They're getting so close. This emphasis on meditation, reflection, but so often, and I don't mean to be disrespectful of another tradition, but so often its empty. It's about like becoming one with the universe, for example. But you know what? The universe doesn't care about you. The universe will destroy you. If you go into space, you die. If you hug a bear, he's going to eat you. The universe is violent, and dangerous, and doesn't think about you because the universe doesn't think. Its creation. It's the maker of the universe who is greater than the universe, who designed the universe, that wants to be with you!

And so when many people, especially here in Southern California, they recognize the need for meditation, reflection, for spiritual life, but its often targeted, and this is the mistake, at basically nothing. When you say the universe, to me it sounds like nothing. When you say I am the universe, or I am a god, that sounds sad to me. There is a God, who is a person, who is separate from creation, who loves you and wants to connect with you, and wants to speak life into you, and bring you to your fullest.

And maybe if that's you, and you're into that thing, you're getting so close, and I congratulate you. You've been already given a gift to see and sense spiritual things, but you're missing. Draw close to the creator of the universe. He wants to meet you there, and watch what God does, amen? Okay.

So when we abide in Jesus, we sleep better. When we abide in Jesus, we become smarter, we have a better vision, and most importantly, we are full of joy. And I want to say one more thing before we talk about these disciplines. Very often we stop practicing many disciplines, even like going to church. In fact the number one reason people stop going to church is because they sinned in their life and they're embarrassed. So it's like there's this upside down understanding that if I'm doing everything right, if I've had like several weeks of good behavior, I can go to church.

But if I like mess up in some way that I'm ashamed, or I fall off the wagon and get drunk again, that well I can't go to church for awhile until I get things right.

And we apply this, as well, in our relationship with God; that when we're feeling holy and we feel like we've had a lot of good behavior, then we approach God's throne boldly, but when we mess up or something like that, then well we just feel like well I must not be a Christian because I mess up. And you know that's the thing. If you think anybody is super holy, you just don't know them well enough. You just got to get to know people better. You'll feel much better about yourself. You really will.

Look, God hates sin, but He loves you. And God wants you to do your best and forget the rest. So we don't try harder to not sin and then approach God, rather, being connected to the Father is the very thing that helps us be the kind of people we want to be; not only morally but in terms of doing the goals and the things that we want to do, okay?

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So, here are four disciplines that work. Four things that if you do these, you will see that your life with God will come alive in a good way.

The first is the discipline or the practice of silence and solitude. Silence and solitude. Silence is the idea that we don't have to perform, we don't have to say anything. We think well how do I pray if I'm silent? Prayer is about communion. It's not just about talking, it's about listening. And when we become silent, our words begin to have a new power. Words that come from a place of silence are words that have a lot more power. And solitude can be anything. It can be a bedroom in your house with a lock on it. You take a break from your kids or your cell phone or from your spouse. You get all by yourself, and it can also be your favorite place in nature. I love walking around back bay. It can be anywhere where you can be alone. It can be your car.

And so you have this moment of solitude, and if it's been awhile, almost always the same thing happens. The first thing that happens, the first emotion you feel is boredom. This is boring. I want to do something. I want to check my Instagram. I want to play online chess. By the way, I'm not speaking personally, I don't do this, but I've heard some people do this. Boredom. You just feel bored. You want to do something. You need to press through that boredom, and if you wait there, wait in the boredom, in the boringness of silence and solitude, that boredom will become something very painful. It'll become loneliness. And then you really will want to run away. You'll have this moment of soul pain where you feel all alone. Sometimes your mind gets even more worse than it was. You start worrying about all the things you have to do, you start feeling angry at people who have hurt you, and most of all, you feel alone. No one understands me and this can get to you.

And it's so important that you press through that loneliness, and if you do that, then the loneliness becomes a gift. It becomes solitude. Because if you hover in that loneliness long enough, especially if you do it in the spirit of Jesus, you will find out very quickly that you are not alone. That you will see that the whole time unconsciously you had this sense of loneliness and despair that you thought you were alone in the universe, that the whole time the Lord was with you. And that's why this discipline is maybe the most important of all four that I'm talking about today; is that you actually experience, after you press through the loneliness and the spirit of Christ, that He was with me the whole time and that opens up a whole world of possibilities.

The second discipline, and this happens sometimes in these moments of silence and solitude, is a very scary word for Christians, but is a very Biblical word, and that is meditate. Meditate is all through the Bible. In fact when the Bible talks about itself, it usually doesn't say to read or to study, although those are very worthwhile things, and it does say to do those at times, the most common word that's used in the Bible talks about itself is to meditate on it. To meditate on these things. To meditate on the word of God. The Hebrew word that's used for meditate is this word Hagah. Everyone say Hagah. Notice how there's a sort of groaning-ness to it, and that word literally means to moan, or groan. Hagah. It's what the Jews are doing at the Western Wall. When you see rabbis and Orthodox Jews, and they have the Torah and they do this thing, the reason they wobble like that is so their body doesn't become weak standing in one place, and what they're doing is groaning the Torah. They're saying it over and over, or the Psalms. They're saying these words so that they go from their head and understanding, into their heart, belief. That these things go to a place where the words are almost in an unconscious, spiritual place where they drive the decisions that they're making.

So the idea of meditation is that you take a line of scripture or a line that's from the Lord, and you say it slower to yourself over and over, and the idea is that I want my mind and my heart to focus on this one thing and nothing else. So you get pulled away. I got to go to the grocery store. Nope, I got to pay my bills. I got to call my boss.

And when those thoughts come up, you keep saying this thing over and over to draw you back into the word of God. You can do any scripture, memorize any scripture that you love, but my favorite is one from Brennan Manning. Actually, he meditated on this once when I was running, and I got the best run time I'd ever had because I was meditating as I was running. And it's this phrase – Abba. Abba means dad. So Jesus calls His Father Abba, I belong to you.

And so what you do in your time of solitude, you take ten/fifteen minutes and you try and focus on just this one idea and box out everything else. You just focus on the word of God. Maybe you hold your hands, and you just take a deep breath and you say, Abba. I belong to you. Abba. I belong to you. I know it's awkward and weird to watch some dude doing that on a stage but you do it. Do something like that, or the Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want. Just one sentence and you practice it in your own space over and over, and watch how the Lord meets you there.

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You just have this sense that the Lord is with me. You have a centeredness, a rootedness in God's word. That's incredibly, incredibly powerful.

The third discipline is fasting. Fasting is feasting. Juan Carlos Ortiz used to say fasting is not a hunger strike. I always thought that was hilarious. This idea that sometimes we fast because we want God to answer our prayer, but that's not the point. The point of fasting is to sort of let go of your physical-ness and dive into your spiritual-ness. That you neglect, in a way, your body, not in a bad way, you don't harm it, but you stop giving your body what it wants, and instead you give your spirit what it needs. And in doing that, as you feel hungry, it's like a constant reminder to turn your heart and your mind to hear from God. One way you can fast is to simply go meal to meal so you go dinner to dinner with no meal in-between. But if you really want to go for the gold, talk to your doctor first before you do this, if you have any health issues. You can do one part juice, so you go to Trader Joes, you get organic apple juice and do one part juice, two part water and carry it around in a jug or something, and you just drink that all day long, and don't eat anything. And the first day is fine until about evening, it starts becoming miserable. The second day is hell. It's just total hell. It stinks. You're not going to like it. And then day three, you get this amazing something where it becomes just an incredible experience. You feel hungry but it's not getting to you anymore. And in that space especially, that's where you just begin to really dive into your prayer life.

Okay, the fourth thing that I think is so important, and we have such a technological advance; this is such a gift from God is music. Do you know how lucky you are that you can listen to any kind of music anytime you want with absolute clarity and beauty? What a spiritual gift that is from the Lord. It's through technology, but the fact that you can listen to music that inspires you, that draws you to heaven, that draws you to the Lord is such a gift. You don't have to be rich to access it. You can go on YouTube and listen to anything you want.

And what I do a lot of times is I'll go into my quiet place and I'll just play worship music and I'll let it go. And then because I'm neurotic, this is helpful for me: I just pace back and forth in my room listening to the worship, and I let it get to my heart, and I'll do that as I'm praying. Maybe hold my hands out like this, pace back and forth, and just allow the spirit to invoke things in my heart that I need to pray for. Praying for things I'm struggling with, praying for my friends, praying for my team, and just like that. For my family members. And that music, in a weird way, creates an incredible environment to move past the stuff of this world and kind of brings you to a great place where you can talk to God.

So these four things: silence and solitude, meditation, fasting and then music. Practice them and just do it consistently five/ten/fifteen minutes every day and do it for awhile. It takes 28 times to make something a habit. And watch, just make a commitment – try it for 28 days in a row or something, and just watch how your life will be radically transformed.

Guys, the Lord wants to be with you. He wants to hear from you. He wants to spend time with you and He's created a way that its possible.

Lord, we love you, and Lord there are people here who desperately want a touch from you who have never experienced it. I pray that you hear their cry and you respond and you touch them, in Jesus' name, amen.