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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.

HS: And welcome church family and visitors. Recently I was reading an article by Darling Magazine that talks about how our bodies are not ornaments but powerful vessels. And it is so true. Your body, even if it is broken right now, can and is used by God to heal, bless and love others. Thank you so much for being here today. We love you.

BS: Yes and we really are so glad you're here, and today we're going to talk about some of the keys to finding health, and how our thoughts affect our physical health, and how God really does want us to honor our bodies. So let's begin this morning with a word of prayer:

Father, we thank you, and we love you, and we ask in Jesus' name that your Holy Spirit would be so present in this space for everybody watching on television or here in the service. We thank you, God that you want to do something special in our lives today. Thank you that nobody is here on accident. We are all here for a reason, and Lord we're excited to see what it is you're going to do. We love you, and it's in Jesus' name we pray, amen.

HS: Amen. Turn around and shake the hand of the person next to you and say God loves you and so do I.

SCRIPTURE – 1st Corinthians 6:19-20 – Hannah Schuller

The words of Paul found in 1st Corinthians 6:19.

Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit who is in you? Whom you have received from God? You are not your own. You were bought at a price. Therefore, honor God with your bodies.

Church family, your body is an amazing instrument for goodness. It is a gift. Amen.

DECLARATION – Bobby Schuller

Friends, would you hold your hands out like this as a way of receiving, and we're going to say this creed 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.

Thanks, you can be seated.

MESSAGE – Bobby Schuller "God Loves Your Body"

Well today we are talking about my new book that just came out, Change Your Thoughts, Change Your World. And we want to recommend everybody gets it. It's a great gift if you have somebody graduating from high school or college, but more than that, it's just a great guide for discipleship. So at the end of each chapter I include new thoughts and new disciplines to practice. And so as a part of that, we're sort of practicing going through this book together as a community, both here and on television.

But one of the chapters that we're going to be talking about today is God Loves Your Body. And that's actually what we're going to talk about today – this importance that your body really is a gift. It really is something from God to you that is sacred, that is special, that is valuable, and that in a world where we're always upset about our bodies for whatever reason, maybe they're not acting right, they're not doing what they used to do; we have hair growing in all the wrong places, and not growing in all the right places. These are things that happen to us, and very often it's easy to have angst about it. So today we're going to talk about this idea that God loves your body.

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By the way, incidentally, I originally was going to name this sermon God loves your body and so do I but then I thought that wouldn't go over very well, so I dropped it.

At any rate, we really are grateful for our bodies, aren't we. We're grateful that we're alive, we're grateful that when we're healthy that we are healthy, but it's in those times when we're sick or things are not the way we want them to be, it's easy to feel angry or upset about how we are.

The main thing I want us to do is first to observe. One that it's a gift, an honor that we get to be in this world and we get to be alive. But second, that the way we think about our body actually can have, for both a theological and a medical perspective, the way we think about our bodies and the way we think in general can have a positive or negative effect on our bodies. Do we all agree with that? I think that if the way we think about our bodies has a good effect on our bodies, wouldn't it medically advisable to think well of your body? So let's talk about that today.

The body is sacred. A body is holy. In Judaism in Christianity, the body is where most of the work of God is happening in your life. The body is what the Lord uses to make a difference in the world. If you're going to build an orphanage, you need to use your arms. If you're going to heal the sick like Jesus did, you typically lay your hands on people. If you want to comfort a child, usually hug that child, you use your body to create a physical manifestation of something spiritual.

It's amazing how often we forget that no matter how broken or hurting we are, God likes to, as Henri Nouwen says, use our broken bodies to heal others. God likes to make us wounded healers. And some of the greatest healers ever in the Christian faith themselves were sick. Isn't that interesting? I always find that curious that there were many sick people who had the ability to heal others, but they themselves couldn't be healed.

And so I think that's it's important that we don't get upset at our bodies, but understand that the body is considered a part of the soul in Christianity, not separate from it. That the soul is the thing that holds everything together: our spirit, our mind, and our body. And that for Jews and Christians, the body was an important part of our faith. In fact, one of the first sort of theological enemies of the Christian church was a group called the Gnostics, who believed that everything about the body was bad, and everything about the spirit was good. They believed, many of them, that Jesus was from God, but He was a spirit; He didn't have a body. And so when John, the author of the gospel of John starts his story, he starts it off with really an attack at contemporary Gnostics. He says, "In the beginning was the word, and the word was with God," and so the Gnostics liked that, and then he says, "and then the word became" what? "Flesh! And dwelt among us."

It's interesting because in Koine Greek, there's two words for the body. One word for the body is this word Soma. Everybody say Soma. Soma's beautiful, you know? It's an Olympian, a model, an actor, somebody who's got a six-pack and six percent body fat; one percent body fat for every ab. They're just awesome. And that would be Soma, the ideal body.

But then there's this other word in the Koine Greek called Sarx. It's often translated as flesh. And that's all the stuff you don't like. That's aging and hair and sickness and all that stuff, right? It's Sarx. It's the flesh. And John goes out of his way to say – "And the word became" not Soma, not some beautiful, amazing thing, it became flesh! And I feel like if I was writing that, I could say and the word became a dude! Like a dude.

And this is so important because it reiterates this idea theologically in Christianity and Judaism, that the body is not bad; that the body is not evil. That the body is a gift, and the body is sacred, and its holy, and it's from God, and it's a gift to you. That's not what we hear from the world, is it. From the world, the body is a gift if it's beautiful and perfect. And so that image is reinforced constantly in what we see and what we hear.

So often on television and movies, even if you're a gorgeous young woman, you're going to sometimes feel like you're ugly compared to what you're seeing on TV. And it's so amazing because these people that they'll put on TV or in magazines, they pay some of the most attractive people in the world, who very often are like 16 or 17, and even when they're older, they go on special diets for a week just for this picture. A lot of them are dehydrated. Then they give them makeup, and then they make sure everything is perfect. And then even after they take the picture with all the right lighting, it goes into a computer where then adjustments even then are made to make the hips wider and the waist smaller and the hair darker. And this is what we do. And everywhere you see these images of the ideal body.

It's interesting because Apple, the largest growing group of consumers for Apple products is senior citizens. It's probably because they're the only ones who can afford them. But when you look at an Apple commercial, you don't see senior citizens buying Apple, do you. You see kids doing it.

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You don't see some guy in a walker, like listening to his I-pad or I-pod. Right? It's always like some young, really fashionable, good looking person. And it's because our culture is constantly reinforcing this brief window of life when you're at your most beautiful but also at your dumbest. That somehow this is the ideal.

And so when I look at our faith, not as it's expressed necessarily in modern American culture, but the way it's expressed as it's always been for two thousand years: a sea of faith that values the body no matter how sick, no matter how old, no matter how useless.

In the first century, Romans were known to throw out people with special needs and the church was the one who received them. Look in our faith, your body is sacred; it's a temple, it's wonderful, it's beautiful, it's a gift. And even though not everything's perfect, God values your body, God loves your body, and so do I.

You know what I think of a lot? When I think of this body, I think of a very handsome, very wonderful young man named Nick Vujicic, who has been to this church many times, and he has no arms and no legs. And this is a guy who has become a good friend, and has just impacted the world for God using his body, using his smile, using his words, using his Australian accent, which helps. And you know Nick, his story is incredible because when he was born with no arms; he never had arms, never had legs, so he's never even known what it's like. He has this foot, just this foot that kind of comes out his hip, and he uses that for everything.

And he talks about when he was a kid how much he hated his life. He became depressed and at one point, I think, attempted to kill himself. And it was when he came to faith in Jesus Christ that he was able to understand that even though he didn't have arms and legs, that God could do something incredible through his life, and because of Nick, millions and millions and millions of people have come to know Christ. He just travels around encouraging people and sharing the gospel. And you can just see that so many people have come to faith. I remember asking him once; I said does it bother you that people are always talking about your arms and legs? Don't you feel like they just kind of move on and get to know you, Nick. He's a really interesting, awesome guy. And he said no, in a way I feel like it opens doors. It allows people to listen to me.

And so when I think of the kingdom of God, when I think about what it means to be a believer, I think of someone like Nick that in the ancient world where unless you were perfect, you were sort of thrown aside. In the kingdom of God, Nick is the greatest of these. He's the greatest of these.

So today as we talk about in every single chapter in the book and in this series, I want to talk about this idea of a thought we can all inherit that will change how we experience life, and how we experience God. And the thought today I would love for you to receive is this thought: my body is a gift, even though it's imperfect. Your body is a gift. What a precious gift it is. It's a sweet and wonderful thing. And the more we can think of our bodies as a gift from God, that is a house of God, a place where God dwells, I think the healthier we'll feel, the better we'll feel, and the more we'll see God do good things through our lives.

In 1st Corinthians, Paul is writing to the Corinthian church, and the most of this chapter is about sexual immorality. And we're not going to talk specifically about sexual immorality today, but I want to see the reasoning behind why Paul thinks sexual immorality is not ideal for the church. And he says this: "Do you not know your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit who is in you? Whom you have received from God? You are not your own. You were bought at a price. Therefore, honor God with your bodies."

So this is really interesting to me this whole idea that we are to honor our bodies and honor God with our bodies. And that we recognize that what was bought with a price. Do you see there? Your body. Look, when we talk about faith and salvation, we often think about how God bought my spirit with the blood of the Lamb. That He saved my spirit. But what Paul seems to be saying here clearly is it's not just your spirit that He purchased, but He bought your body. And just as you would buy a house, He bought your body to dwell in, to live in, to abide in, to do good works in.

And when you received Christ, you received this spirit of Christ into your physical body so that miracles and power and comfort and the character of Jesus Christ could be expressed and experienced through your body towards others. So why is God so upset about the way we treat our bodies, that we honor our bodies? Because He has to live there! That's His home, that's His temple, that's where He dwells, that's where He is.

This is a big deal for first century Christians, who by the way were mostly Jewish people who had just, many of them, lost a temple. They had just lost their temple. The temple was the heart of the Jewish faith when Jesus came.

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You see that the sort of evolution of the Jewish people, first of course begins with Abraham, then it continues with this culminating of Moses leading the people out of Egypt, becoming a people, receiving the law, and then building this thing called the tabernacle. The tabernacle was like a moving temple. It was a tent and it had barriers and it had all sorts of accoutrement. That's right. Accoutrement: various things within the tabernacle. And as it moved around, everything was supposed to be done a certain way.

And the reason that this tabernacle was done so specifically was because the throne of God was right in the middle. The throne of God was called the Ark of the Covenant. And they believed that Yahweh God was like sitting atop that throne, so that the closer you got to the throne, the more respect, fear, admiration you had to have. And so that's why there was all of these rights around being appropriate when you get to that place.

When Solomon built the first temple, he does away with all the shrines and altars throughout the promised land, and builds a fixed place that later, after the destruction and then the return to Israel, a second temple is built. The second temple just becomes this amazing, amazing thing. If you ever go to Israel, you can see these foundation stones that are gigantic and just the incredible amount of wealth and power and effort that went into building the center of worship. And this temple functioned as sort of the heart of first century Judaism.

There was a saying that went something like this. It's like the whole earth is holy and belongs to the Lord. But holier than the earth is the Promised Land – Israel. But holier than Israel is Jerusalem. But holier than Jerusalem is the temple mount. But holier than the temple mount is the temple. And holier than the temple is the holy of holies where the throne of God is.

And so for the Jewish people in the first century, it was like the whole earth belonged to God, but the closer you got to this holy of holies space where the spirit of God physically was like just dwelling in spirit, in this room, the closer you got to that, the closer you got to God. And this was important for these people because what you see is two big things happen. One – at the crucifixion of Jesus Christ, there's this veil that covers that room where God is, and it says that the veil was torn in two. And the image you have is like the Holy Spirit leaving that place and as it goes, almost with contempt, breaking this barrier between this holy of holies and worshippers. Where does that spirit go, by the way? Do you know where it is? It's inside of you and inside of me! That's what Acts chapter 2 tells us that in our baptism, we receive this Holy Spirit from God so that God actually dwells in you! That's powerful.

But the second big thing that happened was in 70 AD there was a revolt of the Jews and the Romans destroyed the temple, and they destroyed the city of Jerusalem. And so what we forget is that the first century Christians of the first 30 or 40 years, or so, after the resurrection and ascension, first century Christians are worshipping under the leadership of James, the brother of Jesus in Jerusalem, in and around the temple. This temple is their home, too. For them, they don't see Christianity and Judaism as a different thing. They are a sect of Judaism that believes that the Messiah is Jesus Christ, and that He is the anointed one.

And so when the temple is destroyed, both for first century Jews and first century Christians, there's this crisis. Where do we go to find God? Where is the holy space? Where does the spirit dwell? Where do we make our sacrifices? Where do we pray? And what we see becomes so clear within the movement of Acts. God had already made a new temple by the time that Herod's temple had been destroyed. The temple was people, disciples. It was no longer a perfect male priest that could go to the holy of holies once a year because he was from the right line and the right order and had gone through all these things, but it was children and women and gentiles. There is now no more Greek or Jew, slave or free Scythian, Barbarian, Roman, rich, poor. Everyone now could access the power and the life of God, not by traveling to Jerusalem to go to the holy mountain, but by simply recognizing that the spirit was already within them through their baptism. Isn't that powerful? So that in becoming a follower of Jesus Christ, you become like the tabernacle was when Moses left Israel. You become like this moving temple that carries around the power and the life of God in your body. All of this to say that this is why we should honor our bodies. Honor your body. Honor your body. Honor your body. Be grateful for your body. If this is how we honor our bodies, how is it to dishonor our bodies? Well how would you dishonor anyone? You would say bad things about them, you would have contempt for them, you would dislike them, you wouldn't forgive them, you'd be quick to judge, slow to mercy. I think sometimes we're that way with our bodies, that maybe we don't dishonor our bodies through some of the things like sexual immorality, but maybe we dishonor it through contempt. I hate my body. Stupid body. It's not doing what I want it to do.

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To me, I think that as a Christian, it is important that I recognize that my body is one of the most wonderful gifts God has given me. Your body is one of the most wonderful gifts God has given you. And you may ask well why am I sick all the time or why am I struggling with this pain or this ailment. If God wants me to do something great, how come He's not healing me? And I don't really have the answer for that. But what I do believe is that when we change our thoughts about our body, we actually change our body. Change your thoughts, change your world. Change your thoughts about your body, change your body.

And there's actually medical evidence to support a lot of this idea. That if we begin to appreciate our body as a holy gift that things over time, will begin to change in a right way in our bodies.

Think about this for a minute.

In the incarnation, which is our belief that Christ is present in the world through believers, in children, in women, in men, in everyone, that when you comfort someone in your body, when you speak well of someone, when you forgive someone, when you encourage someone, it's like the Lord is doing that with you. So when you hug a crying child, it's like Jesus is hugging them, too, even though you're not maybe saying a prayer as you do it. When you look at someone and you say you could get through this, or I'll be with you, or you don't have to suffer alone, I'll be with you, it's almost like God is saying it to that person, too.

And this is why even though our bodies are imperfect, it's so good to recognize what an awesome thing it is that God has made your imperfect, you don't always love it body, He's made it His home. And to Him, it's not just a little thing, it's a big deal. He loves you, and He loves abiding in you and doing good work through you.

So let's begin to think of our bodies in that way, and imagine what could happen if over the next year or two, five years, we begin to have better thoughts about our body, what could actually happen physically and medically in our body. We know that certain thoughts can actually create measureable observable changes in our body just by thinking! Anything like fear, trembling, laughter, arousal, these are things that happen in the mind that the body physically changes, but it's only in the mind that things are happening. Right? Rage, you can see how your body responds.

In fact there's a word for it in the medical world. You have to, in music and scientific method to measure a drug it's called a placebo effect. So when you have two groups that you want to try a new medicine, you have one group that's the case study, and then you have the other group that's the control group. And you have to have a similar looking pill that's maybe sugar or salt that you give to the other group because in some cases, as many as 30% of the people who are receiving literally nothing except a trick, can actually fool themselves into believing they're getting medication will actually get better. Isn't that strange?

And so doctors really don't have an explanation for this. There are lots of reasoning and philosophies, but there really is no clear scientific observable, measureable answer to why this is. There are, however, doctors now that are saying maybe placebo is a bigger thing than we thought, and maybe it's something we can actually utilize in medicine, which I didn't know this, but that's sort of unorthodox.

There's a guy named Andrew Weil, who's a doctor out of Harvard, who says we should use placebo as a way to help people. They used to do it about 150 years ago. He's recommending they trick people again to help them get well. And all of this is because doctors can observe that when people, even when they're sick, have a positive mental attitude, when they have a positive outlook, when they have friends and family that are with them, that their thoughts, their stress, their anxiety, all these things, it infects them physically. We need to remember this.

By the way the opposite happens, too. There's a negative placebo that can happen, as well, called a nocebo. I didn't make that up. That's a real medical term. Nocebo affect is the opposite. That if you think you're sick, you can begin manifesting many of the symptoms even though none of those symptoms are actually caused by whatever medication or fake thing that you're getting. So if you received a fake pill, for example, you could start getting negative effects, even though all you're getting is salt or sugar or something.

The nocebo affect, I think, is almost more important than the placebo affect because I think more people are tempted to think negatively about their body and their health than they are to think positively about it. And we don't always think about how thinking about our body in such a negative ways could actually be causing us physical, medical harm. This is important because I remember.. actually this is funny that a lot of medical students apparently have this nocebo affect.

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When they're memorizing all the sicknesses and all of the symptoms, they have this thing called medical school syndrome. There was a guy I saw on a Ted Talk, and he said that his brother-in-law was a medical student, and he said hey John, I'm really worried. I think I might be going through menopause.

I think that shame doesn't help us. I think fear doesn't help us. I think worrying and thinking poorly about our bodies will have negative effects. And I think if I've learned anything as a pastor, it's this: shame always makes things worse no matter what. Shame always makes things worse. Whether you're shaming another person, or shaming yourself, it never makes your behavior better, it never makes your life better, it never makes your morality better, and it never makes your body better. Looking in the mirror and saying nasty stuff about yourself is not going to make things better. You know what makes things better is gratitude.

I've never known a person that was really, really grateful and unhappy at the same time. Have you? I mean the word gratitude and happiness is almost the same word. And when we begin to instead of not think about what we have lost, but think about what we have left, and begin to be more grateful for our bodies and desire and expect that maybe through this body God can do something great, I think we actually will see some measureable changes in our bodies over time that are really positive. And that's why I would just say to you that I think it's so important that you're kind, kind to your body. Be kind to your body. I think if you're kind to your body, your body will be kind to you. I remember years ago I had this word from the Lord. I was studying miracles and great manifestations of God, and one of the most interesting things I found was that it seems like forgiveness always precedes miracles. So that you find great moves of God, or great miracles that happens very often right before one person is forgiving another person, and somehow that opens up a gate for some great move of God.

And I remember during that time, feeling like the Holy Spirit was telling me in this sermon to say Bobby, tell them to forgive their bodies. I remember thinking at the time, that sounds so weird. But it made sense to me, in a way. And so I preached that, and as I've traveled the world, I've had a lot of people who said I didn't realize I was, in a way, harboring anger or resentment towards my own body, as though it were a person.

And so I would say forgive your body. Forgive it for not doing all the things you wish it would do, and not always feeling the way you want it to feel, and begin to thank the Lord for your body. You won't have it forever. Someday we'll be given new bodies, new resurrected bodies in the kingdom of God, and that'll be a wonderful day. But for now, recognize that the body you do have is a gift from the Lord, and ask Him to do something great through you and through your body today.

Father, we thank you. We just say thank you for all that you've given us. And I do pray, Father, for miracles and power. For everybody that's sick or struggling with illness, I thank you God that you're the same yesterday, today and forever; that you can do a miracle in our lives if you want to. Lord, we're asking for it. We're asking for it. And I pray, Father that you'd help us all to view the bodies in a new way. Instead of seeing it as something to show the world, or something that's gained, Lord help us to see it as a temple of the Holy Spirit, as a holy gift from you. Thank you Lord that you love us. It's in Jesus' name we pray, amen.

BENEDICTION – Bobby Schuller

And now the Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord make His face to shine upon you and be gracious unto you. The Lord lift His countenance upon you and give you His peace, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, amen.