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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: And welcome visitors and church family. Today know God does not wonder if you are capable, He wonders if you are willing. Thank you so much for being here today. You are loved.

BS: We really are so glad that you're here with us this morning. And we're so thrilled to have the band I Am They with us in the house today. They're going to be leading us in a couple of songs. And so grateful that everyone is here. We believe that God has you here for a reason.

Let's begin with a word of prayer. Father, we thank you and we love you, and we ask, Lord, in Jesus' name that everyone under the sound of my voice would receive exactly what they need to receive. Lord, when our people were in the wilderness and they needed manna from heaven, you gave it. And many people are here and they need something from you, Lord. We're asking in Jesus' name. Lord, help us. Lord we love you and we thank you, 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 – Acts 7:54-60– Hannah Schuller

You may be seated. In preparation for the message, Acts 7:54:

When the members of the Sanhedrin heard this, they were furious and gnashed their teeth at him. But Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, looked up to heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. "Look," he said, "I see heaven open and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God."

At this they covered their ears and, yelling at the top of their voices, they rushed at him, dragged him out of the city and began to stone him. Meanwhile, the witnesses laid their coats at the feet of a young man named Saul.

While they were stoning him, Stephen prayed, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." Then he fell on his knees and cried out, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them." When he had said this, he fell asleep.

May God give us the same passion as Stephen that we are even willing to lay down our lives for His kingdom. Amen.

INTERVIEW – Matt Hein (MH) – Bobby Schuller (BS)

BS: Wow. I Am They, everyone. It's such a joy to have you guys in the house, Matt Hein.

MH: Thank you, thank you.

BS: Thank you so much for being here today.

MH: It's an honor to be here.

BS: And I want anybody, if you're just watching on television or online, or if you're here, get this CD. Or go to I-tunes right now and download it. This is an amazing work that you guys are doing. Tell me a little bit of the story behind your band?

MH: Yes, it's a wild story. We've been on a wild ride actually since 2008, about. We had one night of worship and that was all we intended it to be was to pull our small community together in Carson City, Nevada, and it was actually five churches; we didn't have enough people in one church to form like a full worship team, so we actually had like five churches come together to form this worship band and put on this one night of worship.

BS: What happened? I mean was there some like big outpouring of the spirit or just a great experience?

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MH: I mean in our area, when 300 people show up for a night of worship, it was like holy smokes, do you guys want to keep doing this? And so we just kept doing that and more people came and more doors started opening, and we just want to be faithful and follow the Lord just in that faithfulness, obedience to what He was calling us to do.

BS: Well this song, I Am a Child of God is one that's special to us. It's one that our daughter Haven sang when we were on tour in Europe and she sang it here a few months ago, so thank you guys for bringing that song to the house today. Tell me a little bit about the name I Am They. It's after John 17, right?

MH: We're leading the league in pro-nouns, yes. John 17 is a passage, Jesus is praying for His disciples and sometimes known as a high priestly prayer, and referring to His disciples as they, and really calling out, paving an identity for us to walk in as followers of Christ. And we believe that as a band it's so much more than the songs that we're just singing, but it's the lives that we live outside of this place. So I Am They is just a personalization of this identity that God has given us. He says things like that they would be not of the world. That they would be one just as you and I are one. So for us to carry that as the church, the collective they, is just important to us and embodies what we do.

BS: I love it. It's great. And it reminds me of like this big emphasis that we're supposed to put on discipleship, on being daily committed to following rabbi Jesus. It's really, really what you want to help people do. Something about music helps that. I remember my grandpa said once that every great movement always had its own music.

MH: Wow, that's cool. Yes, I think it's a great unifier for the church.

BS: Yes, that's right, amen. The song you're about to sing, its original to you guys and it's called Scars. Before you sing it, can you just tell me a little bit about your heart behind it?

MH: Yes, absolutely. I mean we in the band, we all have testimonies and things that God has brought us through as individuals and collective as a band, and I know that everybody out there has some kind of scar that they carry, or wound, whether it's physical or spiritual or emotional. But Jesus had scars, right? And the Bible says even by His wounds we are healed. And so we oftentimes hide our scars, but the truth of God's word is that we don't have to. We can actually in Christ reveal those things, and ultimately even praise God, be thankful for the scars because we find out more of who He is, His character, His heart towards us, His goodness and His love, even in the midst of those painful things that we walk through as human beings. So that's the message of this song is just to turn our pain into praise, and just share the message of the gospel, which is our hope in Christ.

BS: Such a good word. Yes, Jesus, after the resurrection, has these holes in His hands and His feet, and that's great. And that's the heart of Christianity, too, is that even though when we go through tough times, God is always with us. Or as my grandpa used to say, tough times never last but tough people do. You guys are so full of the spirit and so full of life, and it's such a gift to us to have you in the house, so thank you, I Am They, and Matt Hein, thanks so much, guys. We love you and appreciate you. God bless you.

MH: Thank you. Yes, love you guys.

DECLARATION – Bobby Schuller

Friends, would you hold your hands out like this as a sign of receiving. Let's 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.

MESSAGE – Bobby Schuller "A Glorious Life and Death "

Today we're finishing the back to school series about disciples making disciples, training a child up in the way that he or she should go, and they will not depart from it. And we're talking specifically about the power of reaching the next generation. Doesn't always mean children, it doesn't always mean teens, but it means that we're always going to be doing things to support those who are coming after us, not only in our places of work and leadership and churches, but especially in terms of discipleship. That we think about making not Christians but disciples. Making people who are committed to following and knowing the rabbi Jesus. To be more and more like Him in everything they do. And so with all the kids going back to school and college, it's a great time to especially talk about them.

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You know Jesus loved children, Jesus loved young people. There was a time when they didn't want the children to come to Him and He said hinder not the children unto me. He said the kingdom of God is made up of ones like this. If you want to inherit the kingdom of God, you have to become like a child. Even Jesus' own disciples, the 12 disciples, scholarship believes, were teenagers, maybe early college students. The youngest of them was John and most people believe John was somewhere between eight and 12 years old. John was a kid. No wonder he's called the disciple Jesus loved. He's like this little guy that was always with their group.

Peter, who was sort of the captain of the group following Jesus was maybe 25 or 30, but none of them were old men, and there were old men following Jesus. In the group of 70 and the broader group, there were Nicodemus, older men who loved the Lord. But His inner circle, the ones He really wanted to pass His mantle to were young people.

In a world that glorifies youth, you always want to be careful not to share in the sort of glorification of youth, yet at the same time, we also must remember that the example of Jesus Christ was to believe in the next generation, and to invest in them.

And so today I want to finish with this idea that the best way to invest in the next generation is to simply do whatever you can to be as passionate and bold about loving God and loving others the way the rabbi was, the way Jesus was and is. Do, as the scripture says: love the Lord with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength. Are any of us perfect at that? Certainly not. But to wake up in the morning and decide that the best way I'm going to have an impact on the next generation is to love the Lord with all my heart and all my soul and all my strength, and use that same passion to love my neighbor as myself. If I do that, I will see a change in the next generation. It's interesting because many of you know I'm a PK, but I'm like a multiple PK. My dad is a pastor, my grandpa was a pastor, my great grandpa was a pastor, my great uncle was a pastor, lots of siblings have been in various ministries. How many in the room, just a show of hands is a PK, by the way. Anybody here? What the others don't know is we're in an actual club. Nice to see you guys. We'll be meeting later this evening. We have a secret handshake.

No, a lot of PK's, actually I find, that very often PK's tend to have big personalities, and they tend to be.. they have a.. what's the word I'm looking for? A reputation that very often PK's end up being rebellious, angry. Why is that? Why is that? I think we all know the answer. It's because their parents, their father or mother very often is one person on stage but different when they go home. Or even worse, their parent thinks the church and service to the church is more important than the child. And what you find is that very often PK's end up hating the church, hating God, hating everything they stand for.

How many people have turned away from Christian faith because of the evil that people have done in Jesus' name? And yet I'm so thankful for my dad and my grandpa, my parents. They really did love the Lord with all their heart. No, my parents are not perfect. They'd be the first ones to tell you that. But I did always believe that they genuinely loved the Lord and they genuinely loved me.

Maybe you're here today and you're like but you don't understand. I loved my kids, I poured into them, I made sacrifices for them, and now they're gone. Are you blaming me? I'm certainly not. In fact let me encourage you. If you made those sacrifices, if you planted those seeds, I guarantee you that God can use those seeds to turn them around. They're looking to those good memories to help them, so don't give up hope.

But all this to simply say that the best way to make a difference in the next generation is to live it out! Is to eat the food you're cooking. To not just talk about it but to truly live it, to believe it, to love the Lord with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, that to love your neighbor as yourself. One great example we're going to look at today is the first martyr in the church, a Jewish Christian name Stephen, who was a part of the body of Jewish people, who at this point are still completely Jewish, they're still at the synagogues, they don't view themselves as different from Jews, and how his confrontation with the leaders of the Jewish people is a move to lay his life down to influence the other young Jewish people there, to see that their leadership is not godly like the men and women who went before them.

And his.. we've used this quote a lot, this Greek proverb that "a society becomes great when its elders plant trees under whose shade they know they will never sit." Tertullian says "the blood of martyrs is seed." And I think this is true of Stephen's life: that his life, like Jesus, is like a seed planted in the ground of those who view it. That God is going to use the seed of His faithful act of sacrifice and death to turn the hearts of the young men and young women who are watching.

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One of those, by the way, is named Paul. Paul, the apostle. Actually Saul at the time, and is changed in his conversion. A little background to the story, it begins in Acts chapter 6. The word of God is being preached throughout all of Israel and God is moving in power, and then there is this thing that comes up within the body of Jewish people, and it says that the basket that is being taken for widows and orphans are being rejected or held back from the Greek speaking or Greek Jewish widows and orphans. Just a little background to that.

In Jesus' day, Israel, it kind of looks like California. It's a coastal kind of desert kind of place. And in the first century, Israel is sort of broken up into three parts: Galilee in the north, Samaria in the middle, and Judea in the south. Interesting thing about this is Samaria, they are considered the ultimate outsiders, and they sort of split the country in two. In fact you can't go through Samaria if you're a Jew. If you travel through, you'd probably be murdered, but even more than that, they believed that Samaritans were unclean and you just weren't supposed to do it. So there's this wide gap between Galilee and Judea, a walk that can take between three and six days. And so the culture is very different.

More than that, 400 years earlier, Jews returned from the Babylonian exile, but not all of them. We often think that this massive group of people came back to Israel, but actually what happened is there were Jews spread all over the world. And they began to congregate in various cities that spoke and practiced Greek culture. One big one was a town called Alexandria in Egypt. It was the center of life and philosophical thinking, and there was a huge body of Jewish people that lived there. The other was obviously Babylonia.

And these Jewish folks were very prophetic in their faith. You almost might think of them as sort of charismatic types. They believed in miracles, and they studied Torah, and they were far from the temple. But over the 400 years since the Babylonian exile, they begin to start returning over this period of time to Israel. And where is the place they go, do you remember? Almost all of them go not to Judea, they go to Galilee in the north.

And so this group of sort of Greek type Jews begins to form in the north in Galilee. It also is kind of like a wealthy.. in the southern part is Judea. This is where Jerusalem is, this is where the temple is, this is where the Sanhedrin is, this is the heartbeat of the Pharisees, and in the south you might say the Judeans are more, I hate to use this word, it's so loaded, but they're more kind of conservative. They're strict, they're orthodox. It's like God doesn't really move in those ways anymore. These are the rules. This is how you do it.

And so over time, you see that they all are sort of one nation, but there is this weird divide that's going on between them, and a prejudice begins to develop. By the way, where's Jesus born, do you remember? In Judea or Galilee? He's born in Bethlehem in Judea, right? His adoptive father, Joseph, is Judean. But where does He do His ministry? In Capernaum, right? In Galilee. He does almost His whole ministry around that little lake in the north.

Of the 12 disciples, 11 are Galilean, Greek speaking, also Hebrew speaking, but Greek. And one is Judean. Can you guess which of the 12 is Judean? That's right, it was Judas. Your guess is good. This sort of highlights a little bit of a prejudice that's existing in the story of Jesus and in the book of Acts, and it's important. And so Stephen finds it.. or this group of disciples finds out that the Galilean or Hellenistic style Jews, that the widows and orphans are not being given food, they're not being cared for by the broader Jewish community, and this is me saying it, that it's probably coming from the Sanhedrin, which has become very like only Jews can be Jewish, and you have to be very strict and very tight, etc., etc., and they say you know what, we need to resolve this issue, and this is what I love. Luke points out that nobody wants to resolve this issue because it seems petty to them, it seems silly. The disciples feel like we need to go out and preach, and it actually, Luke says that they say to one another, are we to wait tables? You know, it's very funny.

And so they pick a group of seven, and one of those seven to go wait tables that is care for widows and orphans, is a guy named Stephen. And Stephen says okay. Okay, great. Yes, I'll do that. See Stephen, in my mind, is someone who just loves people, he loves to reach people, he loves to serve, he loves to be available, and where these other wise men are going to go out and preach and pray, it says he's going to go serve tables. And then immediately Luke tells us nothing about those so called wise men who are going to go preach, he tells us everything about a guy named Stephen; that he becomes the most powerful preacher among them. The one who was willing to do the work that nobody wanted to do because he loved people, because he loved widows, because he loved orphans, because he loved the underdog. That was the one God chose to anoint with His Holy Spirit to preach with power.

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That's a lesson for us. That's a lesson. If God calls us to do something that seems petty or silly in the kingdom of God, say yes. It might be the doorway to something great. And even more so, be the kind of person that just loves widows and orphans. Just loves people.

So the Holy Spirit comes upon Stephen, and he begins to preach with power, and then miracles start just like flowing out of his life and people are being healed and amazing things are happening. And now rabbis and priests are starting to come and believe in Jesus, and this is creating an uproar. And so some people decide, all right, we're going to arrest Stephen, we're going to drum up false charges and bring him before the Sanhedrin, and we're going to make sure that he's killed.

Now before we get to Stephen's execution, let's talk about the Sanhedrin. The Sanhedrin met in a hall called the Hall of Hewn Stone. It's in the temple. So here's the model of the temple, and you can see this main part here is where the holy of holies is, it's like the heart of the temple. And the Hall of Hewn Stone is on the opposite side of that wall. So this is facing the temple, it's only a few feet from it. So they're really, really close to like where they believe God is.

And this is where the Sanhedrin is supposed to meet, and it's like a courthouse of 71 people led by the high priest, who at this time is named Caiaphas. At Jesus' execution, this place is full of people. Josephus says maybe as many as two million people were there for Passover. And they all were really into this rabbi named Jesus. But remember on the night that they arrest Jesus? Where do they take Him? Do they take Him here where they're supposed to take Him? They take Him to the house of Caiaphas.

Now in Judaism, there are three rules about the Sanhedrin, meaning one is you don't meet at night, two is you meet here in the temple, three you never meet in a festival. And look what they did. They arrest Jesus at night, they don't take Him here, they take Him to the guy's house, and number three they do it during Passover. And it's there at his house they decide that He needs to be killed, with nobody looking, in secret. These are the men that have told people that they can't wear two types of cloth together. These are the men that yelled at His disciples for eating a little grain on the Sabbath. These are the ones who got mad at Jesus for healing people on the Lord's day. And yet they break the written law to murder someone.

And after Jesus' death, the whole Jewish community knows it. Everybody knows it. This is the same Sanhedrin. The group that, as Jesus said, will strain the gnat out of a cup, right? But here they are, just doing something utterly evil. They're hypocrites.

And Stephen is brought before the Sanhedrin because the power of God is moving in him, and he gives this sort of amazing speech to them. Now remember the Sanhedrin is made up of 71 rabbis, all of them have the entire Old Testament, the Tanakh memorized, okay? And he's about to tell them about the Torah. So this is already hilarious. It's kind of condescending as he speaks to them. And there they are, they're gathered in the Sanhedrin. Now this time it is during the day, it's not during a festival, and then there's a crowd kind of watching, they're all wondering who is this man Stephen. What's he about?

I wonder if Stephen, when he was being dragged there, wondered what he was going to say?

And I feel that the Holy Spirit told him that the message that he needs to give is not for the Sanhedrin, but for this group of young people that's watching. There would have been children, and other rabbis, and other really good people who are watching. And Stephen begins to speak to them, and he says God called our father, Abraham, out of the land of Chaldeans to make a covenant with Him that He would be our God and we would be His people. Everybody listening is saying of course, we've got the whole the story memorized. We could tell you word for word.

And then he says and Abraham had Isaac, and Isaac had Jacob, and Jacob had Joseph, and Joseph had 11 brothers. They're like, okay, that's a weird way to say it. And he says and his 11 brothers took Joseph, who is considered kind of the greatest of the 12; took Joseph and they sold him into slavery. And they wanted to kill him but wanted to make some money, or something like this.

And then he looks at them and he says you are not like Joseph. You are like his 11 brothers. And he says, and Moses. And now, as he begins to speak, listen to this: his face begins to glow. His face is literally.. his skin is literally glowing with God's glory. Do you remember there's one place in the Torah where someone's face is glowing. Do you remember who that is? Moses! When he comes down from out.. it's a famous story. He comes down with the law and he's bringing it to his people, and his face is radiating because he's been in God's presence.

And as Stephen is saying this to them, he begins talking about Moses and his face begins to glow. And he says to them, Moses said to those brawlers, something, and they rejected him. You are not like Moses, you are like those two men who were brawling.

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And then his face glows even more and more, and everybody's like what is going on. And then he says and Moses, when he was on Mt. Sinai, many of the people made a golden calf and bowed down to that calf. And he said you are not like Moses! You are like the ones who bowed down to that golden calf. And he said and every prophet after them who killed every man of God, that God in His mercy and favor sent to us, you are like those who killed them! What is he referring to? Not only their evil against Jesus, but the way they did it: in secret, sneaky, fake, fake, fake! He says you are fake! You are not men of God.

Is he saying this for the Sanhedrin? No, he's saying it for those who are following them. He knows these words are going to get him killed. He knows it. But he doesn't care because he believes that he can almost bait them into doing to all the prophets to do that to him.

His finishing line is oh you of uncircumcised ears and hearts. What does that mean? The hearts and their ears are not of God; that they're unclean. He says you have rejected the Holy Spirit. And with that, they begin to take Stephen. It says they freak out, they gnash their teeth, they grab him, and they lay their coats at the feet of a young rabbi named Saul. St. Augustine says that without the work of Stephen, Saul would have never become Paul.

So they take Stephen and they drag him out of the temple, and out of the city, which is a long way to drag a person. And there he stands, and heaven begins to open up before him, and they just start chucking stones at him, they're ready to kill him. And as that happens, it says that all of heaven opens up, and he looks and he says I see before me the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God. He literally sees Jesus, not sitting, but standing. It's the only time in the New Testament that it says Jesus is not sitting but standing at the right hand of God. What does that mean? He's standing to honor.

You want to hear Jesus say well done, good and faithful servant? Be like Stephen. Be willing to go the extra mile for widows, for orphans, for young people, for those who are hurting. Be willing to live your full life for the gospel of Jesus Christ. If you do that, Christ will stand for you as you stand for Him.

And he says Lord Jesus, boom, boom, rocks hitting him, spitting on him, throwing trash at him. Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. Another one hits him in the side of the neck. He falls to his knees, dying, and his last words are – do not hold this sin against them, Lord. And he breathes his last. Final words – love your enemies. Final words – Lord, forgive them. Who does that sound like? That's Jesus. Lord, forgive them for they know not what they do.

If you want to have an impact on the next generation, be like Stephen, man. Be like Stephen. Be willing to care for those in need when other people have more important things to do. Be like Stephen. Be willing to stand up for the Lord in the most uncomfortable time. Be like Stephen. Do what you're going to do, not to get at someone, but to bring truth to that third party; those young people, those children, those kids who are listening, this is how, this is how you make disciples of the next generation – by living with passion, and by living with power for those who are to come after us.

Maybe you're here today and you're like, Bobby you don't understand, I'm an old man, I'm an old woman. My kids are gone, my grandkids, they've moved out. I can't have an impact anymore. And I felt so strongly as I was praying for this service between the Lord was saying it's not too late for you to have an impact on your kids and your grandkids. It's not too late for you to reach out. It's not too late for you to make a difference for them. Someone needs to hear this today. That we think it's already done, it's already gone, but let me tell you as an almost 40-year-old man, my parents still have a big impact on my life. I think no matter how old you get, your kids are always going to be your kids. Your grandkids are always going to be your grandkids. And if you are willing to seek with all your heart to invest in them, to love them, to care for them, even when it hurts, to reach out to them, to say you're sorry, to be with them, to shake hands with them.

And maybe it's not your kids. Maybe it's your grandkids. Maybe you don't have kids or grandkids. Maybe it's the next generation. Maybe its students. Maybe its teenagers. But that you're willing to say Lord, put young people in my life I can pour into, I guarantee you are walking in the yoke of Stephen; it's the yoke of Jesus. That I'm willing to lay down my own life to make an impact on the next generation. I'm willing to let my own blood be the seed that can plant the trees for tomorrow. When you become that kind of person, you become the kind of person that when you get to heaven, both Stephen and Christ will be there saying well done, good and faithful servant.

There's nothing like living the gospel with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your mind, and watching the Lord do great things in the people you love. Those are the greatest treasures. I remember Hannah and I, we were having a little worship night with our kids..

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I hope it's okay to say this about Haven, but it seems so small but we were worshipping together upstairs, the four of us, and she said mom, dad, do you ever feel like God speaks to you? And we said yes. And she said, did God just speak to you now when you were worshipping? And I said well in some ways, but not directly. Hannah said no, not right now. She said I feel like God spoke to me. And she told us this great thing that she felt like the Lord was saying to her for our whole family. I can't tell you how much that blessed my heart. I feel like there is no greater reward than knowing. And maybe it's not your kids, or maybe you don't have kids or grandkids as I said, but knowing that there are children or young people, teenagers, college students in your life that are getting to know the Lord personally. That maybe it was through you at first, but eventually it's like you're the training wheels and then you come off and they've got it all to their own. They've got it all to themselves. There's nothing better than that. And I guarantee when we finish this life, when we go to heaven to be with the Lord, this will be the thing we think about. It'll be the legacy. It'll be the lives we touched, people we impacted, did we invest in those who will be here after we go. And that's our prayer, amen?

So Lord, we pray for that. We pray for our children, our grandchildren, our great grandchildren. We pray for young people in America today. Lord, we pray for so many millennials in particular that society loves to make fun of, that loves to mock, and Lord we're not going to do that. We're going to believe in millennials. We're going to believe in their children. We're going to believe in the next generation. We're going to believe in teenagers and college students. And believe that this can be the greatest generation America's ever seen. We're going to believe or whatever country that we live in, Lord, we're going to believe, Lord, that they're going to know you. They're going to be the type of people who serve orphans and widows. They're going to be the kind of people who are willing to lay their lives down for the gospel. They're going to be people committed to knowing Jesus and following Him. People committed to knowing the text. Lord, we are asking for that in Jesus' name. And Lord, we love you, 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 peace in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, amen.