

Hour of Power Deutschland
Steinerne Furt 78
86167 Augsburg

Telefon: 08 21 / 420 96 96
Telefax: 08 21 / 420 96 97

E-Mail: info@hourofpower.de
www.hourofpower.de

Baden-Württembergische Bank
BLZ: 600 501 01
Konto: 28 94 829

BAN:
DE43600501010002894829

BIC:
SOLADEST600

Büro Schweiz:

Hour of Power Schweiz
Seestr. 11
3594 Göttingen
Tel.: 071 690 07 81
info@hourofpower-schweiz.ch
www.hourofpower-schweiz.ch

Spendenkonto:

PostFinance AG, 3030 Bern
Konto: 61-18359-6
BAN:
CH1609000000610183596

Hour of Power, 14.06.2020

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. Hello!

HS: Welcome church family. Welcome visitors. We're so happy that you've joined us. It's interesting because I've been talking to a lot of my friends on the phone lately, and we are all going through the same quarantine, but we are all not having the same quarantine experience. I have a friend who I was talking to yesterday and she was saying her and her husband, they're still both having to work and she's trying to do some of her work from home, but their young kids are feeling exhausted and it's hard to manage everything.

And then I have another friend who their finances are so stressful right now. And then I have some friends who live alone, so they're feeling really isolated, painfully lonely. And then I have some people, some friends who they're like, oh this has been great for our family. This has been a bonding experience.

I just really want to pray for those of you right now who are experiencing exhaustion, who are experiencing stress, who are feeling painfully lonely. I want to just pray for you right now. Would you join me?

Lord Father, we come before you and I ask for every person who can hear my voice right now, Lord, I ask for all those who are going through stress, painful loneliness, exhaustion, I pray for your Holy Spirit to cover them from the top of head to the bottom of their feet, Lord. I pray that you would give them the courage to ask for help. And I pray that you would send people to help them, Lord, to help relieve their stress, Father. We thank you for your goodness to us. We thank you for this day, Lord. We lift it up to you, Lord, and we say that we love you with all of our hearts and all of our soul and our mind and our strength. And in your powerful name we pray, amen.

BS: Amen.

HS: Turn around to the person next to you, your cat, dog, whoever is near you, and say God loves you and so do I.

SCRIPTURE – Jeremiah 29:4-7, 11 – Hannah Schuller

In preparation for the message, Jeremiah 29:4-7 and 11:

This is what the Lord Almighty, the God of Israel says to all those I carried into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon. Build houses and settle down. Plant gardens and eat what they produce. Marry and have sons and daughters. Find wives for your sons and give your daughters in marriage so that they too may have sons and daughters. Increase in number there. Do not decrease. Also, seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the Lord for it because if it prospers, you too will prosper. For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans to prosper you and not to harm you. Plans to give you a hope and a future.

Amen.

INTERVIEW – Doug Bender (DB) – Bobby Schuller (BS)

(VIDEO ROLL IN)

DB: My name is Doug Bender, and I Am Second.

VOICE OVER: Doug Bender is a writer for I Am Second, a media organization that tells real stories of real people who surrendered their lives to God in order to fully live second.

DB: Negative thoughts I had in my head, I thought everybody had that about me. VOICE OVER: Doug himself has shared his story a couple of times of how he found God working in his life. His new book, I Choose Peace, tells the testimonies of a number of people who found complete wholeness when choosing to be second. Please welcome, Doug Bender!

(END OF VIDEO)

Prospering in the Pandemic

BS: Good morning, Doug welcome, we're so glad you're here.

DB: I'm so excited to be here.

BS: I have to say that I've really enjoyed so much the I Am Second videos. It's so great, and you've put this book together where you finally kind of taken some of, I think, your favorite stories, put them together in this book. First, tell me what was your favorite I Am Second video that you've done?

DB: Oh man, well that's kind of like asking what's my favorite child. I love them all but perhaps for different reasons. One that I've always loved and we've been telling for over a decade now is Brian Head Welch from KORN. Such a dramatic transformation from someone who's life was really just a disaster, to someone who has fallen in love with Jesus, and is now spending his life trying to tell people about Him. We've now told his story a couple different times now as the chapters have unfolded, but his has been one that we were able to come back to and kind of give an update from the first book in this latest book of just what Jesus has been doing in his life. It's been great being a part of his story and helping to tell it.

BS: I remember seeing that. We've had him here, as well, and he just has such a heart for God and there is something about someone who comes out of that world to be totally rescued, transformed was so compelling to hear that. So in your series I Am Second, a lot of people may not have seen them before. Why did you choose the name I Am Second?

DB: Well you know it's a combination of two things. The first is this idea that in our culture winning and being first and number one, this is what most people are aiming for. Even if we're not saying it out loud, it's how we tend to live our lives. And so we wanted to challenge that. And we also wanted to do it in such a way where it made people curious. And so you come across something that says I Am Second, it just strikes you as something so strange, so counter cultural that you're like what is that, and that's really that feeling we wanted to both challenge, but also raise curiosity and as they explore these stories and get to know these folks, they realize that they are second because Jesus has just radically changed their lives. And that's the story we want to tell and it really hits at kind of the core of where a lot of these folks start at.

BS: During this COVID-19 thing, I'm sure people are so almost sick of hearing it, and yet when I get up in the morning, it's the first thing I look to see on the news. Is anything changed? Like are we closer to getting out of this quarantine or closer to a vaccine, all these questions that people ask all the time. I really feel like your book is a great book to read during this time, but I bet you feel that way, too. How does your book kind of speak to what we're all sort of going through in this global crisis? How does it apply

DB: It's interesting with books, from concept to in the bookshelf, its multiple years, so the concept of this book started many years before this, and of course we had no idea what was going to happen, so it's been a real godsend to see how God has brought a book addressing anxiety, stress, worry, these things that at the forefront of so many of our lives right now, He brought this book right at this time. He wasn't surprised by what's happening right now with COVID-19 even if the rest of us are. And I feel it's been a real godsend to be able to have a book to address people's concerns about are you worried about your health, you're worried about your finances, are you concerned about loved ones? And this is really a book that's helping people address those concerns, those worries, in addition to everything else we're already dealing with. So a book that says I choose peace in a time where most people are struggling to hold onto peace, I think this is just a very timely book.

BS: I love the title I Choose Peace. I love the cover design. You guys did a great job, and I love the book. And it is interesting, isn't it, like it's not a peaceful time. And yet it's like everybody is home, it's all through you know online stuff. People are at home constantly. You'd think it'd be a really peaceful, relaxed time, but I don't know very many people that feel relaxed. Most people are feeling pretty anxious. Do you have any words of advice for those of us who are at home? I mean nobody knows what's going to happen over the next couple months. Nobody knows what's going to happen economically, in their business. They don't know about their health. Some people may know someone who's sick. Others may be frustrated with the government. What kind of advice do you have for us? You're a pastor, too. I mean what do you think about this pastorally?

DB: I can't help but think of one of the stories that is in this book from a guy named Austin Carlisle. He was in a band called Of Mice and Men. We got his interview just as so much of his life was falling apart, actually. He came to interview and at that point in his life, he said I have lost everything. His health wasn't great, finances weren't great, and he said right now I own two suitcases of stuff. That's it. That's all I own. He came into the interview with nothing.

Prospering in the Pandemic

And he said, you know what, I have never been happier, I have never felt more peace. And that realization, this is man; we didn't plan the interview for that moment, but it happened and he came in here just struggling in so many ways but having peace. So I think the biggest piece of advice I can share with folks is let this be a time to have God kind of winnow out those distractions in our life. Sometimes He lets us do that winnowing ourselves, and sometimes He does it. And I feel like this is a time where He is kind of thinning out some of those distractions, some of those stressors in our life so that we can take some time to focus on Him. And I think that's something; that story, but the others as well have spoken to me, and I think it really applies to this environment.

BS: Well Doug Bender, thank you so much for those words of wisdom, and I'm so sorry we couldn't meet in person. You're in Pittsburgh and we're here in Orange County, California. How is Pittsburgh doing, by the way, with all of this, as a city?

DB: You know, not too bad. We have some issues, of course, but we're not one of those harder hit areas yet. So we're praying that continues and we can see things go back to normal.

BS: I love your book. I love the videos that you've done. You've made such a huge difference for the kingdom of God. The book is called I Choose Peace from Doug Bender. Doug, thank you so much. Bless you. Stay safe and thank you for joining us today. We love you and appreciate you.

DB: Thank you so much for having me.

DECLARATION – Bobby Schuller

Well for those of you who are at home and those of you who are here in the building, would you stand with me? We're going to say this creed together as we do every single week. Hold your hands out like this and we'll 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. Amen!

MESSAGE – Bobby Schuller "Prospering in the Pandemic"

I want to talk about the importance of the struggle, and struggling where God has you. Now a lot of us we feel stuck during this COVID-19 thing, and it's kind of a bummer experience for so many people. As Hannah has said this morning, actually we were talking on the phone, and we both kind of in our spirits felt the same way that it's like almost like we need to point out that all of us are experiencing this, probably most of us in a mostly negative way, but all of us are experiencing in a different way. Some of us are scared. Some of us are angry. Some of us are bored out of our minds. I'm looking at you, Haven. Are you bored? No, Haven's been having a great time, I guess. But I feel bored. And we have these different experiences, and I think it's so easy when we see what someone says or hear what someone says to just get angry, to judge, to lash out because you feel frustrated, and I understand that, but I want to encourage everybody no matter what you think about all this or how you feel, let's have grace and kindness for each other. The soul is very fragile and especially now everybody is feeling particularly fragile and anxious. The world needs someone like you who's life-giving, encouraging, wise, a leader, the world needs people like you who are full of grace, slow to anger, and I want to encourage you to be that kind of a person.

When we were saying the creed, I was thinking to myself, there are not a lot of people that have to worry. But I was thinking about it, actually I was talking to Hannah in the car: I have never seen more crazy drivers. Like when we go somewhere, there's hardly any traffic here in LA.

If you live in LA or Orange County, you know usually the 5 and the 405 are just always congested most of the time, and it's so strange to be driving on a Friday afternoon to go pick up dinner or something, and there's nobody on the road. And then I'll be driving down the road and then I will see people go like flying by.

I told Hannah I was like it seems like people are driving crazier now than I've ever seen anywhere in my life. And I'll be like in the right lane going like fast but not super fast, like 72 in a 65, something like that, to the right, and a car will come up like on me at like 100 miles an hour like barely miss me, and I'm like I'm the right! Leave me alone! And she actually sent me a text that said that in America right now that the amount of speeding tickets for over 100 miles an hour has gone up 87%. I think this is a symbol for when people get in their car, they're like I need to get out, I need freedom, I need the road, I need to feel alive. There are other challenges, too, that we're facing. I read recently that divorces are at an all time high. And before you laugh at that, it does seem funny in some ways, but on the flip side, I think a lot of couples during this time are being forced to deal with underlining things and I don't think that's a bad thing. I think that's a good thing.

Prospering in the Pandemic

I think it's an opportunity for couples that have maybe been surviving to not divorce but actually come through this deeper, understanding one another better, and so much of that is going to be having grace. All of that to simply say we're struggling. We're struggling. No matter who you are, you're struggling. There are bright moments, there are fun times, but I believe that when we get to the end of this, this struggle will have been a good thing for you. I'm just going to even pray that over you, that when you come out of this, you'll look back and recognize that although it was boring, although you felt frustrated, maybe you got sick, maybe your business didn't do as well, or maybe you got furloughed or lost your job, that even within that struggle and that suffering, you recognize that you came out a new person; that God did something awesome in your life that made you better.

Maybe you missed out on something. I saw Arnold Geis is back, and I think that's so awesome, but then I just thought to myself that probably means your show was canceled; this amazing show that Arnold was doing in New York, and I think that's so sad, this amazing opportunity. Maybe you're experiencing something like that, some big loss that you were really looking forward to. But I'm just going to trust that what you've lost, God is going to replace tenfold, a hundred fold, and I'm going to ask that during this time, you trust Him with faith that He's going to do something great in your life. These losses are temporary. Don't look at what you've lost, look at what you have left, and trust that this struggle, that God can use this struggle to make you stronger.

I often preach about the nurturing side of God. I love the side of God that He loves us just as we are. That He loves you right where you are. He loves you just as you are and not as you should be and He's on your side all the time, but there is this other side of God that's like coach God or dad God. There is this side of God that He does not protect us from tough circumstances. God does not shield us from struggle. In fact very often, like a coach or like some dad's, He kind of nudges us into struggles because He knows who you're going to be when you come out of the other side of that.

I know my dad, when I was kid, there were so many times my dad was nudging me into certain things, and I would get so frustrated, sometimes I would cry or lash out. My dad, he taught me to surf even when I was afraid of water and didn't feel like I could swim very well. And he'd put me in like martial arts classes and I'd fight and I'd get hit and kicked and take protein shakes and yet I recognize how that made me tougher. When I was a kid, there was like three years straight I hated baseball, and yet my dad made me keep playing baseball. In all those cases, I look back and I go man, I love baseball today and I loved fighting, not that that's a good thing to brag about, but it made me strong on the inside. And I'm so grateful I can play piano, and I'm so glad that I can swim and surf. And I think if my dad had just kind of eased off right when that got frustrating for me, that as an adult I wouldn't have these gifts.

And I think that's why with my own kids; with Haven when she gets frustrated sometimes with homework or piano, as a parent you want to ease off and kind of protect your kids from the struggle, but you recognize that although there is a time for that, that most of the time one of the things that as parents we need to do is hold our kids hands, or if you're mentoring somebody, or maybe you're a big brother or big sister you come alongside the person that you're mentoring and you show them that they're stronger than they think they are. That although this kind of stinks, this experience is a bummer and it's hard and you want it to be over, you walk alongside them because you want them to emerge from that experience with a new gift. Well I just think that's what this can be for you, and I think it will be this for you.

And maybe right now you're bored or you're frustrated, or maybe you're fighting with your family members or your roommate or you're feeling angry at the government or angry at the people that are angry at the government, or whatever it is that you're feeling, I just want to encourage you to stay calm, keep a smile on your face, and keep your hand to the plow and trust that when you get through the struggle, you're going to be a different person in a good way and I believe that for you. In other words, struggle where you are. Struggle where you are.

In a way, life is a struggle, it really is. It's interesting because the name Israel means 'the one who struggles with God.' Isn't that interesting? We talk about God being this coach kind of dad, godly good dad figure, but Israel doesn't mean struggles with sin, or struggles against evil, but struggles with the epitome of love; struggles with the epitome of grace and joy. Struggles with God Himself. That's what Israel means. It means you struggle with God and I think that so much of life is understanding that life is a struggle. Whenever you leave this struggle, you're just going to replace it with another struggle. And that may seem like a negative or depressing thing to think about, but that is life.

Prospering in the Pandemic

Think about every great movie you've ever seen. Every great story you've ever heard. It's a story usually about a struggle, and the struggles change but you find that a great story has the hero or the character who goes through that struggle and comes out born again – changed – a new person. Usually comes home and people can see in them that because of that struggle, they changed and became someone better. I think that it's amazing that as God's people, we're not the ones who struggle with evil, we are the ones who struggle with God. And God will continue to cause us to struggle because He wants us to be stronger. Now that's a good thing. Praise the Lord. Praise the Lord that He thinks you are strong enough, that He thinks you are smart enough, that He thinks you have what it takes to face whatever struggle it is that you're going through. You don't go through it alone, that's the other thing. God is with us. He said I will be with you, I will never leave you, I'll never forsake you. And don't forget, these struggles they usually come in waves. So we get the little dips, that's nice. But another one is coming. Okay.

To reiterate this point, I'm teaching from two passages today. The first is a story that not a lot of people have heard about the tribe of Dan. Now when God's people left Egypt and entered into the Promised Land after wandering in the wilderness, God sort of placed them in different areas around Israel, and the 12 tribes of Israel sort of became like 12 municipal or even state-like areas within the nation of Israel. We have a map here and you can see sort of how they broke down.

And the one I want to talk about today is Dan. You can see that this is where Dan sort of arrives. They're kind of between Jerusalem and Benjamin and the coastal plain here, and Dan is there and you kind of get the feeling that they're not happy about where they are. And one of the reasons they're not happy about where they are is because it's not on this map, but there is a Philistine city called Timnah nearby, and Timnah is constantly attacking Bethshemish, which is the sort of main capital city for the people of Dan. So constantly, it never ends up being a huge thing, but constantly the Philistines and the people of Dan are just butting heads. It's just a constant struggle, struggle, struggle, struggle.

And Dan just is not into it. And finally when you get to the book of Judges, the people of Dan, and I believe in rabbinic teaching says that sort of against the will of God, they want to leave the place that God put them in because of the struggle. They want to find another place that's struggle-less; that's peaceful, and you can understand that! You can understand that.

So in this story, in Judges chapter 18, it says that the tribe of Dan takes five warriors and sends them north into the northern part of Israel. And he send them there to spy out, to see is there anywhere like kind of outside on the edges where we can be and be a people.

So they send these five warriors north and they stay the night at this guy Micah's house, he's a Jewish guy, and he puts them up and they meet this Levite and they care for them. And when they find out this Levite, who's a priest can kind of hear from God, they say tell us something, because I think they're feeling not sure.. they don't know if this right to leave the land that God has given them to find something else, so they ask this priest, they're like is God cool with this? That's what it says in Hebrew. Is God cool with this? They specifically say ask and see if God will say this will be a success.

Now I was so sad when I read the NIV version of the way they translated this. NIV says something like the Levite or the priest told them that God was going to approve or bless their move. But that is not what it says in Hebrew. I will read you the literal Hebrew.

It says "before the Lord is the course on which you are going." Now when Jewish rabbis from the first century write about this, that is super ambiguous. Again, let me read it again: "before the Lord is the course on which you are going." That can be read as God's blessing your way, or, God sees what you're doing. So it's sort of up to these five guys from Dan to sort of interpret what this line means, and whether or not they're going to go forward with scouting out a new home for themselves. It reminds me of this very famous line from the Oracle of Delphi; excuse me from taking a train here, but there was a king, the king of Lydia in the ancient world, his name was Croesus, and he had this incredibly wealthy, incredibly powerful empire and his next door neighbor, the Medes, had been conquered by this new guy Kourosh or Cyrus, a Persian, who had conquered and formed a new empire, and they were neighbors. And they were at peace, sort of, together and Lydia was toying with the idea of invading their neighbor. And so Croesus, the king of Lydia goes to the Oracle and asks her this question: what will happen if I invade the Persian Empire? And this is one of the most famous lines; it's from Herodotus, the most famous lines in history. The Oracle says: if you attack Persia, you will destroy a great empire.

Prospering in the Pandemic

So how do you read that? If you attack Persia, you will destroy a great empire. And the king of Lydia reads this as if you attack Persia you will destroy Persia, but that's sort of the thing. That's why it's so great. He destroyed Lydia! A great empire.

And this is how I read this passage. When they go before God, and they ask the priest shall we look for a new land, it says before the Lord is the course on which you were going. In other words, God sees what you're doing. They go and they find this land, they come back and they tell the tribe of Dan, they're like we found this city Lyesh. It's in the middle of nowhere! Nobody's nearby, everybody's happy, it's like Hobbiton. Everybody's farming and eating food, and it's prosperous and they're safe. And we should go there and we should take and that should be our new home!

So they put this army together of 600 men, they march north, incidentally they raid Micah's house, who was the guy that was hospitable to them and a fellow Jew, and they march north to Lyesh. They burn it to the ground, and they make it their new home. They kill everybody and build this new city which they call Dan after their tribe, and they just celebrate because now they're like yeah, we're in the middle of nowhere, we have this prosperous land, and now we don't have to struggle anymore. We don't have to struggle anymore. Hooray!

And what you see as the rest of the Old Testament goes on, is that every time Israel gets attacked by a nation, the first people, because the attack almost always comes from the north, the first people to get hit, not with little Philistine raiders, but with huge armies like the Assyrian Acadian Empire, and the Babylonians. The first people to get nailed and obliterated is the tribe of Dan. They are the first city on your way into Israel, so they moved from one struggle that they didn't want, into another place that they thought would be safe and prosperous. They actually moved into probably the worst place to be if you don't want to fight. And the rabbis taught that this is a story for us. That no matter where we are, there is no place that we will not struggle. You will always struggle with something. But God will always struggle with you. Trust that wherever it is that you're currently struggling, that God is with you, and that He'll get you through it. In other words, we have to be the kinds of people that don't say get me away from struggle, get me away from hardship, get me away from difficulty, but we're the kind of people that say Lord, I'll struggle wherever you want me to struggle because wherever you are is the best place to be. Struggle where God has you. Struggle where God has you. That is a place that is blessed. I want to encourage you, maybe you're struggling right now and this has just been so hard and so difficult. Don't try to, I don't know, to change the situation in a way you're not supposed to. I think very often we want to escape it, we want to disappear into Netflix, or whatever it is, and there's nothing wrong with that. I've been watching a lot of Netflix, but don't forget that the struggle that we're going through, sometimes the boredom, sometimes the argument with your spouse or your kids, sometimes that's needed to happen for a long time. And trust that as long as you look after the kingdom of God, that you try to live like Jesus, God is just going to pour out blessing through these struggles in these difficult times.

That might be one of the biggest struggles that most of us are going through are not fights and arguments, necessarily, and it may not be fighting with our neighboring Philistines. One of the biggest struggles we may be facing is just blessing our neighbor; is just washing the dishes again; taking the trash out; helping our kids with their homework, or being with our family, or blessing your roommate, or dealing with your next door neighbor who maybe is annoying or has some issue or something. That sometimes blessing, which is part of what we're supposed to do, is one of the great struggles that we have. And when I look through that story, I think of the Babylonian exile. Now the Babylonian exile was this terrible experience where the Babylonian empire conquers the Promised Land, and carts off all of, especially the young people, back to the great city of Babylon. Now Babylon in sixth century B.C. is like New York City. I mean it is a huge bustling metropolis, gorgeous. I wish I could do a whole thing on just Babylon because there are so many cool things about it. They have wizards who are like magicians but they're also kind of like scientists and some of the science they get is actually good, but it's mixed with all of this paganism and magic. There is just a lot of this kind of thing. This is where the story of Daniel takes place. There are all sorts of biblical stories that happen in Babylon. But when the Jews first get to Babylon, or the Hebrews are brought to Babylon, this is like their new city, their new town. Its 2,700 kilometers from Jerusalem. Now that's a long way today, but back then that was like the other side of the world. I mean it was months and months of traveling to get from Jerusalem to Babylon. And while they're there, they're just like what is going on. What are we going to do here? Who are we going to be? And I'm sure they felt angry. This was unjust, this was unfair, they were violated, their stuff was taken. And I'm sure they just feel angry at the Babylonians. They wanted to destroy them or hurt them.

Prospering in the Pandemic

Jeremiah, who is an old man at this time and is a prophet, is still in Jerusalem. He sends a letter to the Jews in exile and Babylon. And this is what Jeremiah 29 is. I like to picture that when this letter arrives, a massive people are brought together, these Jewish people in Babylon, and they got the letter from this great leader and prophet Jeremiah who has an Oracle from God and they're like what is God about to say to us? Start a war? Fight with them? Start a riot? There are a lot of us, we can really probably do something. And this guy, he probably gets this letter and he unrolls it, and this is what he reads: "this is what the Lord almighty, the God of Israel says to all those I carried into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon. Build houses and settle down. Plant gardens and eat what they produce. Marry and have sons and daughters. Find wives for your sons and give your daughters in marriage so that they too may have sons and daughters. Increase in number there, do not decrease. Also, seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the Lord for it because if it prospers, you too will prosper. Yes, this is what the Lord Almighty, the God of Israel says. Do not listen to the prophets and diviners among you who deceive you. Do not listen to the dreams you encouraged them to have. They're prophesying lies to you in my name. I have not sent them, declares the Lord. This is what the Lord says. When 70 years are completed for Babylon, I will come to you and fulfill my good promise to bring you back to this place. For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord. Plans to prosper you and not to harm you. Plans to give you a hope and a future." I love this passage. This is the most tattooed Bible verse in the world, by the way. Jeremiah 29:11 – "I know the plans I have for you." But a lot of people don't know the context that this is in. The Babylonian people are scared, they're worried, they're angry, they want to get home and God says be in the city I've placed you. Bless them. Pray that they prosper. If they prosper, you're going to prosper. And marry and plant gardens and have kids and have jobs and thrive where you are. I know the plans I have for you. I know the plans I have for you. I know the plans I have for you. Isn't that an encouragement? This is the context of Jeremiah 29:11.

I think that when God tells a people who have been hurt by the city that they're in that they're supposed to bless them, I think that's a struggle. I think sometimes when you're living with a family member, maybe you're a caretaker. Maybe you have a roommate that you're not getting along with, or maybe you just struggling with your spouse, or maybe your kids had to come home, your adult children, or whatever it is, and you have this struggle, I want to just encourage you, not to give in, not to be a doormat, but to think in terms of blessing, think of this time of struggle as a time you can grow deeper in your relationships. Maybe if you're dating someone, this is a time to go deeper with that person and see if they're really the right person for you. This is an opportunity for us to struggle the way we're supposed to especially relationally. To knead through and work through maybe some underlining things that have been lying under the surface, and to do it with grace and patience and gentleness and not a temper. Not lashing out. I believe God will do something great in this way.

Okay, so just to answer the question that might be on your mind: how do I know if I'm where God has me? I just want to say three very quick things. I'm going to try to do it in one minute.

The first thing: how do I know if I'm where I'm supposed to be is to think of having a Biblical mind. I don't love the idea of proof texting where it's like this thing comes up and I'm like Bible verse!

That's a good thing to do sometimes, but what's better than that is having a mind that thinks, in a way, like the Bible. If you read a lot, you'll find that the books you read tend to change the way you kind of see the world. I remember years ago when I was single, a good friend of mine gave me the book *Fight Club* by Chuck Palahniuk. And it was a really well written, fun book to read. But as I was reading it, for like a week after I finished it, it was a book about anarchy and fighting and all this stuff, I remember just walking around being like booshwazee and like angry and like institutions. I'm not that way normally and just being like super like critical of everybody, and I put on a fight club mind like from reading this book. What I think was a very negative experience, after a week of this I was like what is this? And I'm like it's that book. And I realized that when we read the Bible a lot and we get into it and we study it and we sing it, you can't help but start to get a Biblical mind.

Sometimes people might say when you get like a check, a check in your spirit. I think that check, though it does come from the Holy Spirit, is usually going to be right if you have a Biblical mind. So spend time with the rabbi, spend time reading what He says, and spend time in the word of God. And obviously I'm a pastor, I'm going to say that, but again I want you to think about it in that way.

The second thing is why not just ask somebody? I mean if there is somebody in your life that you admire and you respect, it means so much to them to just ask them what you think. You don't have to do what other people say. You can get advice and turn it down. But free advice is a good thing to get, especially when it comes from people you admire and respect.

Prospering in the Pandemic

If there is someone in your life that is kind of where you want to be someday, ask them. You might be surprised by the answer they give you. Finally, I think especially during COVID-19 we need to rethink boredom. Boredom is not a bad thing. Boredom is actually built into us biologically. You can actually see scientifically that boredom, which used to be so much more prevalent in cultures that didn't have electricity, was an important part of scientific discovery, an important part of creative process. Because we have so many escapes now, it's easy to not endure boredom unto the gifts that boredom can give us. I've taught on this a lot, but now it's so important to recognize this. You don't always have to do this. It's a curse to be bored all the time. It means sometimes we want to watch movies and just have fun, but make sure that there are sometimes when you feel really bored that you just lean into it. You kind of lean into the knife of boredom. Let it go deeper into you. Maybe just sit in a chair and stare at a wall! Have a cup of coffee or tea and just let boredom do what boredom should do. And this is what will happen – if you lean into your boredom, usually it will feel eventually like kind of painful and like a type of loneliness. Just lean into it more. Let it go even deeper, and let that loneliness go deeper and then what will happen, I think, especially if you invite the Holy Spirit into the process with you, that loneliness will turn into more of a solitude. This is kind of what Henri Nouwen said, but I'm saying it in a different way. That the loneliness converts into solitude and then if you press through it, all of a sudden you'll have a sense of peace about you that you didn't have before. It may not work the first time, you might have to try this a few times. It becomes just a sense of solitude and solitude creates joy and creativity. And then out of solitude instead of jumping to that entertaining thing that you want to go to, very often the solitude will lead to something creative. Maybe if you're a musician, all of a sudden a song will come to you. If you're a writer, maybe a new idea for a book or an article will come to you. If you're a builder, a new idea for a piece of furniture you would make. Or maybe you just decide to call that person that you haven't talked to in a long time.

We have to understand that a lot of the most creative and meaningful ideas and actions in our life originate in us in boredom. I mean some of the greatest stuff has happened from people who are in prison, or people who are in quarantine, or isolated, and the only difference between them and us is they didn't have TV's and computers and Netflix and all this amazing stuff that's really enjoyable, but remember that there is a gift in boredom. Remember this the rest of your life. It will help you. And that if you want the gift of boredom, you have to lean into the loneliness and the painful process of this sort of gap between those two things. All right, that's enough. I just want you to know whoever you are and wherever you are, I want you to know one: that God loves you and I love you and this church loves you. Many of us who are in this church or different churches, we miss our friends. I think it's so important; some of our friends really can become like family to us, and sometimes even more meaningful than family in certain stages in our life, I think. And so when you're pulled away from your friends or from your family members or the people that you love, that you get to see every week, it's really hard; it's a struggle. But I want you to know we love you so, so much, and I believe that things are going to get better from here, and to keep your chin up and keep hope alive and know here at Shepherd's Grove and Hour of Power we love you so, so much, and we believe that this struggle will be good for you, for your friendships. I'm just going to believe it's even going to be good somehow for America and for countries that are going through it, whatever country you're in, that it's going to be a blessing to your country. It seems impossible to imagine that could be true, but we're going to pray and believe that through the struggle, God's going to give us a different kind of deeper gift that we didn't realize we needed all along.

Let's pray: Father, we thank you and we love you, and I pray a special blessing over anybody under the sound of my voice that today you'd give us a sense of peace and joy. Lord, I just pray God that you would show us where we need to be and give us the encouragement we need to endure unto victory. It's in Jesus' name we pray, amen.

BENEDICTION – Bobby Schuller

Just a reminder: please continue to support our church so we can hit the ground running when the doors open again. We need your support now more than ever and we appreciate those of you who have already made gifts, we appreciate it so, so much.

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.