

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

IBAN:
DE43600501010002894829

BIC:
SOLADEST600

Büro Schweiz:

Hour of Power Schweiz
Seestr. 8
8594 Güttingen
Tel.: 071 690 07 81
info@hourofpower-schweiz.ch
www.hourofpower-schweiz.ch

Spendenkonto:

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

Hour of Power, 11.04.2021

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 first-time visitors, welcome church family. We love being with you. Thank you for being here. And today we hope you leave here with a renewed sense of freedom because where the spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. You are so loved.

BS: Amen. We are really so glad that you're here. Wherever it is that you are joining us, I just believe your week is going to be better because you started here. So thankful that you took the time out of your schedule to gather with God's people whether it's digitally or here in the sanctuary, you are here and that means so much to us. Let's begin with a prayer: Father, we thank you so much that you love us. We thank you, Lord that you're doing a good work in our lives. We thank you that Lord even though sometimes the circumstances seem bad, you're working on our behalf as we continue to dwell in your kingdom. Lord, develop us every day into true disciples. Help us to burn for you, Lord, to go after you with all our hearts and all our soul and all our strength and mind, and we ask all of this in Jesus' name, it's in His name we pray, amen.

HAVEN: Amen. Turn to the person next to you and say God loves you and so do I.

SCRIPTURE – 2. Corinthians 3, 17 - 18 – Hannah Schuller

In preparation for the message is 2nd Corinthians 3:17-18:

Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit. Friends, the Spirit of the Lord is about freedom. Enjoy the Lord. Enjoy your life. Amen.

Interview Bobby Schuller (BS) and Danny Gokey (DG)

Danny Gokey is a singer-songwriter who competed on season 8 of American Idol and was the third-place finalist that year. Since then, he has continued his music career and has released seven studio albums and many successful singles. Two years ago, he founded the nonprofit, Better Than I Found It, based on the name of his 2017 song. After seeing multiple organizations that assist people due to unfortunate circumstances, he wanted to spread hope and create a ripple effect by helping those who help others. Now, by nominating individuals and organizations for future projects, people can partner with him to make a difference in their communities!

BS: Maybe we can just begin, you can tell people a little bit about amazing story, how you got started in music and about how your faith kind of played an important role in that.

DG: Growing up, I grew up in a family of six kids – there's four girls, two boys. My parents sang a lot when we were growing up. They would make us sing and I used to hate that. I didn't want to sing so we would definitely get in the game and sing our harmonies. We would sing in front of church and I always found it interesting, people always loved it when our whole family, all eight of us would go up there and sing. I remember I was at 12 years old, so I grew up in church, grandfather was a pastor, grew up in church but at 12 years old, I was in the car driving with my dad and my mom; it was my mom and my sister, we'd come home from church, and I was just leaning forward in the car, I was singing a song, and my dad looked at my mom and said 'your son's got a good voice.' You know how parents talk in that vernacular – 'your son.' And I sat back and like heat came over my body, it was like I can sing? I had no idea I could sing. I guess it shows you the power of parents' words because some parents tell their kids they can sing and they really can't.

The Prodigal Father

American Idol showed that, too. But that actually meant a lot to me. And right there, then I had a youth pastor at church is such a huge important part of growing up with developing my gift. Our youth pastor would just kind of just constantly gnaw away at me and get me to sing – ‘I need you to sing, come on, go up in front of church, sing this song.’ And so that was the big start and I was so grateful that I had people that saw the gift, because I didn’t see it in myself, and pulled it out.

BS: You made it to American Idol. What was that like? I mean as a believer being in that environment. I think you placed third, is that right? It still like launched this huge career for you. Tell us about what that was like. It must have been an emotional thing for you.

DG: Yes, it was pretty emotional in the sense where I’d just lost my first wife one month before my audition. And I had promised her that I would try out because she’s the one that loved American Idol. I was working for the church at night and I was driving a semi during the day because the church couldn’t, you know, they didn’t pay all my bills, and even though it was a full-time job, I had to get another full-time job, so working two jobs. What she would do to pass time at night was watch American Idol. Well, we ended up finally getting a DVR and recording it, and I got hooked that year. And I remember watching this one contestant named Josiah Lemming, and I remember watching: he made it to Hollywood and got cut, but his, I mean, what a story and what a voice he had. And this is when My Space was around, so I know I’m dating myself, but I remember going on his My Space page, and he had one point two million followers. And I was like.. it just struck me, I said I’m going to try out for American Idol, and if I can just make it to Hollywood, maybe I can have a music ministry. But the story changed. God knows everything before it happens, but I lost.. Sophia died of a heart condition during a surgery in the hospital one month before the audition. I had a choice to make – either I never go again because next year I’ll be too old, or just go. And I’m so glad I went. I remember standing in line, I remember crying. I would be emotional – happy one moment, crying the next moment, trying to make sense of all what’s happening here. But the interesting thing to me is that I found hope in Hollywood. Like the most unlikely place, you know, because sometimes Hollywood gets a bad rap, but God knows how to use everything, and so I found hope there and God birthed a career there.

BS: I can’t imagine losing a wife. I mean especially sounds like she was an encourager to you, that she wanted you to do this thing. I can’t imagine how heartbroken you might have been. It reminds me how like a lot of people say like they needed the funeral after someone they loved died because they needed like something to do. Is that how it was for.. it must have been a horrible experience for you to lose your wife.

DG: Yes, especially because I mean there was so much prayer that we put in to like God, heal her. God restore her. God guide the doctor’s hands. God. And then when the doctor calls me at 7:30 in the morning after she’d been in the hospital for two weeks, undergone a couple of procedures, was on an artificial heart, all of a sudden, I get a call.. we had so much faith in God. I was like God’s going to do it. I’m not going to doubt, I’m not going to fear because this is how faithful our God is. And I get a call that morning at 7 am, I had just left the hospital that night at 3:30. I couldn’t stay at the hospital, I had to go home, and I get a call at 7:30 ‘you need to come and say goodbye. She’s not going to make it.’ I went in there, I pled with the doctors. I cried my eyes out, ‘please, try more.’ And we prayed in that room when they told me at seven.. I got there at 7:30 I think, or 8:00; we prayed till about 11:30 that night, and finally I signed the papers because I was like you know what, God doesn’t need my help. The doctor said she’s already gone. Like we’re doing all the tests. It was just devastating, but I got to say this like thank God for the verse don’t lean on your own understanding because man, my own understanding wanted me to tell who God was. My own understanding me wanted to start judging Him, judging people around me, judging the church, and thank God, like He says that because we don’t know the full picture and little did I know that God was going to have this restoration story, that God, though He may not cause it, that God can use it. And yes, the rest is history.

BS: I’m sure that if she were still here, she’d be very thankful for the Better Than I Found It foundation that really is an evolution of the original organization. I mean really a part of losing your wife, you decided not to fall into self-pity, although I’m sure you’re broken-hearted, you decided not to get embittered, but you decided to help people who are going through difficult times, and that’s really what we wanted to hear from you about is how you’re able to turn your scars into stars, turn your tragedy, really, into something that could help people. Tell us about that foundation and what you are doing now?

The Prodigal Father

DG: There are so many different redeeming parts of the story, but one of the parts of the story is that when she passed away, we had just switched from my health benefits on the church over to hers, she was a teacher. And the principal came up to me two weeks after she passed and said I have something for you. He said I have a check for you. I said what's that for? And he gave me this check, it was only \$39,000 but at the time it was more money than I'd ever seen. It was a death stipend that the insurance company puts in with the health benefits. And I just looked at that check and I said this money is not going to be my money. I'm going to put it in as seed in the ground and start an organization to keep her legacy alive. Long story short, we have this Better Than I Found It organization where we go around and we find people who are doing great work in their community. And we go and we tell their stories, and then we find what they need and we resource the need, because a lot of non-profits struggle, you know?

BS: Yes, especially now.

DG: Trying to just keep it and trying to make it. That's what we do, but I think the other redeeming side for myself was when she passed away, I couldn't see myself. I couldn't see the next chapter. But here's the good news is that God already writes the chapters. He's already got the chapters written. Nothing takes Him by surprise. And I think the thing that we need to remember is that our job is to keep going. Our job is to guard our heart. Our job is to protect our faith and keep our faith in a place that keeps believing God during the unbelievable moments, during the tragic moments, during the moments that feel like I'm not going to make it. Our job is not to have the answer, our job is just to keep the faith in the answer, which is Christ.

BS: And to remember that the final answer hasn't come yet. What a great encouragement. Danny Gokey, thank you so much for being with us today, and I want to encourage all of you who are at home to check out the Better Than I Found it Foundation. You can check it out at betterthanifoundit.org. Danny, we love you and appreciate you so much. Thanks for encouraging us today, and for continuing to use your music and everything that you have to help people. It means a lot.

DG: It's my pleasure, thank you guys for having me. So honored.

Declaration – Bobby Schuller

All of those who are here with us, please stand with us. Hold your hands out like this as a way of receiving from the Lord. We're going to say this creed together as we do every single week:

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 "The First Commandment"

I want to begin with a story. It was interesting reflecting on an experience I had when I was in high school to think that when I was in high school, I actually had my first pastoral call. I didn't really think about it that way at the time, but looking back, I was really involved at my high school called Christian Student Union in Broken Arrow which is not a huge town in Oklahoma, but has a huge school district. Our high school had 2,000 students in one school and it was only juniors and seniors so there were a thousand people in each class. We had very big programs, and one of the big programs was this thing called Christian Student Union. Now I had had a radical change in my life and I found help in this union as I would lead people to Christ or try and do things in my school to help people know the Lord. I found that in this union, I was able to bring people to have a kind of church experience right there in the school cafeteria. And I did that enough that my senior year they asked me to lead this organization, which is not something I actually really wanted to do. And I said I'll do it if we can change the name from Christian Student Union to SALT. We called it SALT and that was an acronym for students as living testimonies. And it was a big success. Actually, the end of that year, that program was larger than the football program, which is really saying something in Oklahoma.

The Prodigal Father

We had almost 400 people that were a part of that group that were members, and it was a great experience. But part of that, it was like I was a pastor of teenagers as a teenager. It was very strange. And I didn't have pastoral training but I was always being pulled into, for the first time, stories that I never asked to be part of, you know? It was like things that were happening around and dramas and it was the first time I had to deal with a type of.. I guess you could call it church politics where people wanted things a certain way. And it was probably a good experience. But one story that really sticks in my mind, I had this friend, we'll call her Sarah, and she was an amazing person. So full of like life and fire and spirit and became this dynamic leader. And she was promoting this thing, and we all got behind it, called True Love Waits. If you're my age, you might remember this. I don't know if they still do it in high school, but it was a commitment high school students would make to wait until they're married to have sex. I signed one of these and actually fulfilled it. Hannah and I were both virgins when we got married, which seems like a rarer and rarer thing today. But that's a good thing to do, right? I mean to encourage high school students, not on a judgmental way, but to wait until they're married to have sex and to have sexual intercourse. But this became a thing that this girl Sarah oversaw and was not militant about it, but really got a lot of people to sign these cards. And we had, one day we had this display where you take those cards and sign them and we put them on an American flag and when you came to school, you could see hundreds of these students that because of her leadership, made a commitment to wait until they were married, and it was really actually an impressive sight to see that even then, when I was in high school, most kids, especially guys would be made fun of for being a virgin, and a lot of people planned to lose their virginity at prom, so to have hundreds of students, many of them popular kids to say I'm going to do my best to wait till I'm married, I thought was a cool thing. It was later, a couple months after that, that there was something going on in our worship service in the cafeteria and I saw her talking to another girl or group of friends, the memory's a little vague, but some kind of an argument ensued. And the volume was going up and they were talking back and forth, and she started to storm out, and she walked by me and I said 'hey Sarah, what happened?' And she was crying and weeping, and I said 'what happened? Are you okay? What's wrong? What happened?' And she said 'Bobby, I'm pregnant' and walked away. I think about this story a lot for a lot of reasons. I want to be careful because I don't want to cast judgment or make fun of what she went through, or to even suggest that her desire for True Love Waits was somehow vain or fake. I think it more speaks to the human heart that so many of us have this ideal as believers, as parents, as teenagers, as kids, that we want to live up to and so often we fail to reach those things, and it causes us to be not only disappointed in life, but disappointed in ourselves, disappointed in our faith, to give up all together. The most surprising thing about that, and it really taught me a lot about faith and about people, was that after that, even though she was at school, she kind of disappeared. She kept the baby and to her credit, she and her boyfriend I think raised the child, and I'm sure she's a terrific mom and an amazing person. But she didn't come back to SALT and when I tried to talk to her, she was distant. Not mean and not angry, but just very kind of cold. But for whatever reason, there was something I believe in her faith, and probably in my faith at the time, that so much about our faith was about the rules. It was about these things you're not supposed to do. Rules are good, God gives us rules, they're guidelines. It's good to have rules for yourself. But to live for rules rather than for the Lord, to live for guidelines rather than for something that really gives you life, I think is the close miss that religious people; people who want to live a life for God oftentimes miss. And if I could go back in time, I think I would have gone after her to say hey, our community is the best place to be. We want to encourage you to be a great mom. We want to encourage you to continue your studies. We want to encourage you to pursue your dreams. But who knows, I was a teenager and so was she and so were so many of those kids. We were all kids, so who knows. But it's interesting because in life, it's interesting how cultures, whether they're religious subcultures or any other cultures, oftentimes tend to cling to three things. And this is an observation Ortberg, John Ortberg made, and I think it's pretty true that most clicks, political groups, religious groups, organizations have three, sometimes two or four, but it's usually about three things that if you get these three things right, you're in. And if you get them wrong, you're out. When I say picture someone who has a leather jacket, tattoos and a Harley Davidson, you are going to picture what? A biker, right? A biker or someone from Hells Angels or something like that. If I say picture a teenager with pom poms in her school's outfit and she's really spunky and for the school, you're going to picture a cheerleader, right, exactly. And if I say picture someone with holes in their clothing, a scraggly dirty beard, always going around begging for money, you're going to picture a hipster, exactly. A hipster. That's right.

The Prodigal Father

But in life you can find that even in religious subgroups, you're going to find, probably in this church, there's some people who would say they're kind of like three main things that you do. And this was true of the Pharisees in Jesus' day and in Paul's day. That although the Old Testament is full of all sorts of commands involving idolatry or greed or avarice, or things like kindness to your neighbor or kindness to the alien and things like this. The Pharisees really, most of their teaching boiled down to three things: circumcision, dietary laws, and Sabbath. For them, in Jesus' day, that's not true anymore in Judaism, but in their day, these were like kind of the three main things that tried to eek its way both into Jesus' ministry and into Jesus' continued ministry – the church, as Paul was planting them. That Pharisees were not cool with these Jewish Christians, especially if they were converts from Asia minor or Greece or the Roman Empire not doing these things. And so much of Christ' ministry is preaching against this idea that walking with God is about your dietary laws, or your body, the way you do things to your body, or these different rules that have been set in place. What you see from Christ is that it's all about faith – believing. That's why He called His disciples you little faiths. To live a life full of hearts and passion for the Lord, that that was what God wanted from His disciples to reclaim the gift that God had given in the scriptures, not of a life of rules, but a life of a heart that goes after God. To live your life with all your heart, with all your soul and all your strength for the Lord, and to love your neighbor as yourself. For Jesus Christ and for the gospel that Paul preached, it was about the heart! It was about faith. It was about freedom being found and being saved by grace, not by works through faith, and to good works in that point, but to be totally transformed joyful, renewed person. There's no denying that that is at the heart of the gospel in the letters of Paul and in the lessons of Jesus. Though we're called to a holy life, at the heart of it is the heart. What do I want? This is why I enjoy so much the Westminster shorter catechism, which is a founding document for the Presbyterian Church. Catechisms were how they used to teach theology to children, and this is the first question in the Westminster shorter catechism – if only Tim were here I could look to him. Russ, you probably know but you're originally Reformed and so you're going more Heidelberg. But the first question in the Westminster shorter catechism is what is the chief end of man? And the answer is the chief end of man is to glorify God, and to enjoy Him forever. Isn't that a great response? To glorify God. So the purpose of my life is to bring glory to God, and to enjoy Him forever. To enjoy the Lord. And I just want to encourage you today enjoy the Lord. Enjoy His abundance and His favor and His life for you. The gospel is freedom. And that gets me to the title of this message. It makes it sound like I'm just starting. I'm not, I'm halfway through, don't worry. The title is a question, actually. What is the first commandment of the Ten Commandments? Now if you're quick to answer this question, it shows what tradition you're from because most traditions answer this question differently. And you say well Bobby, it's the first one. How can you answer it differently? And the answer is that in the Bible, remember the Ten Commandments are not listed one, this commandment, two, that commandment. Those numbers were added later by traditions. God simply speaks the commands to Moses, and they're sort of numerically ordered. So if you're Reformed or Catholic, I believe, the first answer should be "you shall have no other gods before me." But if you're Jewish, actually I know Haven knows this one because we talk about the Ten Commandments all the time. I always teach Haven, if there's a choice between my tradition, Reformed, or the Jewish tradition when it comes to the Old Testament, we're going Jewish every day of the week because. What is the first commandment? What Jews teach is this: the first commandment of the Ten Commandments is "I am the Lord your God who brought you out of Egypt out of the land of slavery." And you can see why Christian traditions changed that because the natural question is how is that a command? It's a statement. That the first commandment is "I am the Lord your God who brought you out of Egypt out of the land of slavery." Now there are volumes and volumes of commentaries, both Christian and Jewish written about why the first one is this and that one is that. Let me give you Bobby's answer. This is the Bobby Schuller commentary of the Ten Commandments. I believe that it's worth noting that the last word in that is "slavery." That I am the Lord your God who brought you out of Egypt out of the land of slavery is a command but it's also a promise. That if I remain truly your God, I am the God who brings you out of Egypt. I'm the God who brings you out of bondage. I'm the God who breaks your chains. I'm the God who restores you from addiction. I'm the God who protects you from your enemies. I'm the God who's building a hedge of protection around you, even today. I'm the God that calls you to be above and not beneath, the head and not the tail. And by the way, everything I just said is in the scripture. That God brings freedom! What you see in the Exodus story is these Jewish people, many of them wanting to go back to Egypt, and their leader Moses saying no. We have a land of promise before us. Why would you want to go back to Egypt?

The Prodigal Father

And the line is always the same: it's safer there. When we follow the Lord, we follow a path to freedom. Then you might ask the question, well how do you reconcile that with Paul's teaching in terms of the law, and I love the law of the Lord. I love the law of the Old Testament. But I love it through the lens of Paul and through the lens of Jesus Christ. So you might ask the question, well if Paul says the law brings bondage, but then in other places he says it brings freedom. Like what does that mean? And I would explain it this way. I believe God giving the law to the Jewish people was like a fake it till you make it document. It was a way of painting a vision of the minimum of what would happen if your life was immersed in the kingdom of God and in the Holy Spirit. It's like this. I've told this story many times, but it is the most useful personal story I can to reconcile the gospel and the law. When Hannah and I were dating there came a period where I became concerned that maybe we were being too connected, and this is an early, very kind of rigid version of Bobby. And at times, Hannah could feel like she knew in her head that I loved her, but she wasn't experiencing it through a lot of the things I was doing. And guys, sometimes we need this kind of kick in the pants, and I got a kick in the pants and it was like this. She sat me down and very calmly was like I don't feel like you love me. I know you love me, but there are some things that boys who are in love with their girlfriends do that you're not doing and I want to help you get a vision for what that could be like. Let me just pause. This is an embarrassing story for me to tell because I actually think of myself as a very romantic and passionate person. I probably am, wouldn't you say? So it's embarrassing for me to even tell this story now. I put her on the spot. I believe you think that. What do you think?

HS: Yeah, yeah, totally.

BS: There's degrees, okay. Okay. Hannah gives me this document and, in the document, it says 'boyfriends who love their girlfriends talk to them for a long time and ask them how their day is going.' And I can't remember everything on the list, forgive me. I had it for a long time, but it was like open doors for them, take them out to nice dinners, go on windy walks with them, they hold their hands and they notice their outfits, and it was this kind of list of things. And I actually carried this list around with me for a while as like a checklist – did I do this? Did I do that? But I think all of us would say that ideally, I wouldn't need a list. In a perfect world, I wouldn't need a list of rules. More importantly, if I held that thing in her face when she said I still don't feel like you love me, I'm like I did everything on this list! I would be missing something! This is what the law is to a Christian and to a Jew, I believe. That this is the intent of the law is not to be a replacement for a walk with God, but to show when I have a heart that loves the Lord, these are going to be things that I'm naturally going to do. I'm naturally not going to murder people. I'm naturally not going to have coveting towards my neighbor. I'm naturally going to go and go to church and honor the Sabbath. I'm naturally going to be a generous. these are things that are going to happen. I'm going to love my neighbor. And sometimes rookies need a list. Rookie boyfriends need a list, rookie believers need a list. But the ultimate thing for a believer should be a heart that's so full of God that you're doing these things naturally. If somebody asked me, Bobby, do you have a great marriage? And I said yeah, I've never committed adultery, she's never committed adultery to me, we sleep in the same bed, we have a roof over our heads, we're not separated, I mean that would be like join the club. That's like everybody that's not divorced, right? But if somebody said do you have a great marriage, and I said I enjoy my marriage, well that would be a good response, wouldn't it. If I said my marriage is one of the most joyful experiences of my life, I love seeing my wife and she loves seeing me, and we have great conversations and we're affectionate with each other, and we have fun together, those are the types of things you think of, and that's how faith should be. Where if someone's like is your faith good? And you're like well I haven't killed a guy, and I still go to church, and I do all these things. Well yeah, you don't do those things, but why? Why don't you do those things? The ideal answer would be because I just enjoy the Lord. I just enjoy the Lord so much. I see what the world has! They got a lot of good stuff! But you wouldn't call them joyful. But I have this thing in my heart full of joy, full of life, full of the spirit, full of freedom. That's what I have. Why would I give it up? It's the best kind of life to live is freedom and that's what the gospel is. Where the spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom, right? You know that, and that's in the passage from Corinthians that we read today. Paul, when he was writing in Corinth, Corinth was a beautiful city made of freed men, actually. So almost all the people who built this gorgeous city were freed slaves, and the other half were mostly veterans. So the city was full of Roman people, Roman citizens, who were from all over the world because they were slaves captured from Gaul, which is modern day France, Celts from Spain and the British Isles, Danes and Germans and picks, and then from the other side, you have Persians and Africans and Egyptians, and all manner of people who are freed slaves that all gather in this city.

The Prodigal Father

Can you see why freedom is a theme in Paul's letter to them? Through a city of liberty, that city actually established by Julius Caesar, it was rebuilt, the ancient city, but it was destroyed by the Romans but rebuilt. I have to stop from giving a history podcast here, but basically is a free city full of wealth and opportunity and people that have formally been slaves are the version of today's billionaires; just amazing stories, and Paul plants a church there, and he has two key opponents in the Corinthian Church. One is Judaizers.. I hate that word, it sounds anti-Semitic, but that's what they call it in seminary. Its Christians who are trying to make other believers follow strict dietary circumcision laws and they're trying to say Paul isn't truly because he's telling you to break the law. And then he has this other group called the Super Apostles which I believe they were eloquent, well dressed, super good preachers. Remember Paul was considered a bad preacher in his day? And they were really eloquent and they gave these amazing speeches, and they probably were like what we would consider Pentecostal and charismatic. Remember Paul's Pentecostal and charismatic, too. But they were like the weird version; the really weird ones. And one is saying we're better than Paul because look at how the spirit moves in our lives. And the other ones are like we're better than Paul because he doesn't obey the word of God. Can I just say that these two groups of people are still around today! They're like a mainstay in the church. They're like on opposite sides of each other, yet they're the same thing. And what is that? They are fake. They're fake. They don't know the Lord! They don't have the freedom from the gospel! They have empty hearts. So everything that they're selling to you is an attempt to have more influence. Or maybe an attempt to prop up their brittle position. But it doesn't stand against what we know of the Lord. That where the spirit of the Lord is there is freedom and that's what the gospel says. Second Corinthians 3, I'm going to jump to verse 17. "Now the Lord is the spirit and where the spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And we all who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord's glory are being transformed into His image with ever increasing glory, which comes from the Lord who is the spirit." I'll just finish with these two things. I want to encourage you to just enjoy the Lord and to enjoy your life. I want to encourage you to not be dragged down by fake religious people in whatever shape they come in but to pursue the Lord with all your heart. Pursue Him and to pay attention to your heart. Two things. I've said this before, but I want you to walk in the spirit. The spiritual life is a lot like flying a kite. And many of us, we love kites, and they are this amazing thing, like when we're kids, flying a kite is one of the most fun things in the world, and when it takes off like an airplane, you run faster and faster, and then the wind starts to take over, and then finally that kite, it gets into the air and it's this great reward, and you could chill out in the park or the beach or whatever it is and see your victory at play. A kite is employing really four laws, but there are two that I want to look at and that is that there is wind that is pressing the kite in the air, that's the lift. And then there is the weight of the string pulling the kite to the earth. And I believe the spiritual life is just like that. I originally wanted to say instead of walk in the spirit, I almost wanted to say beware books. Because I think that the string is the studying of the word, it is the reading of books, it is the listening to of sermons; that important grounding that the string does to a kite. If you clip that, then the thing just flutters away. But you still need the wind. Without the wind, without the running, without the wind pulling it up, that is the spirit. That is the spirit lifting your soul. That is the very presence of the Lord which cannot be described, it has to be experienced. It is that time when the Lord gives you the word you need right when you need it and if you have too much or not enough of either one of those things, if you pull too hard on the string, the kite comes down, but if you have only wind and spirit and no string, that kite is also going to fall. Its going to flip around and then it's going to crash somewhere. And as a pastor, I see people do one or two of these things in their desire to know the Lord. They lack that harmony of the word and the spirit. Okay, you get it. Number two, and this is the last thing, I'll finish with this, but just pay attention to your heart. This is not original, I just can't remember who did this. So if you're the guy, I'm sorry I stole this from you. But I saw this somewhere years ago and I can't remember, but it's a great way of what I think the Bible is trying to communicate a walk with God. Imagine that each of these hearts represent different people in their walk with God. And imagine this circle here is the kingdom of God, so that's people who are, you might say saved, or people who have made a commitment to follow the Lord. And outside of it are people who are spiritual and they want to know the Lord, but they haven't made a decision or made a commitment, and so I think that the world is like this; that we pay attention to who's in the circle and who's outside of the circle, but God doesn't see it as much that way. God sees our hearts moving towards Him or away from Him. And so you have people outside of the kingdom who are moving away from the kingdom, right? Their hearts are hardened, they've been deceived by Satan, they're just not interested.

The Prodigal Father

And then there are other people who are outside of the kingdom but you can clearly see God is starting to till some soil. He's doing something and drawing them to Him. Maybe one of these key people are going to find them and bring them. In the kingdom itself, though, you have people who are sort of in the kingdom, and they're desperately holding onto their laws and rules, or their traditions, even though their heart is moving away from the Lord. Or maybe they're being tempted by the world to follow some vain thing that is going to lead them to a meaningless life. And then you have people who are in the kingdom and they're still moving closer to God. I hope that's you, and this is who we want to be, right? We want to be these hearts that are in the kingdom, moving closer to the Lord. And all I'm saying is very often we are so tempted to make a report card of our faith. I did this, I'm not drinking as much as I used to, or I'm going to church more, and those are all good things, they really are, but at the end of the day, the Lord sees the heart. The Lord sees the heart. Try to move away from the report card, and try more to pay attention what's going on in here. Where's my heart pointed? And if your heart is pointed away from the Lord, then repent. I mean it. Man, I feel like we forgot that language. There is something really about just like if I know I've gotten cold towards the Lord, to in my own time put some worship music on or something, and get before the Lord and weep and just say I repent and I need you, God. Forgive me of my sins, forgive me of this thing, draw me close to you. The gospel is not good news to perfect people. The gospel is good news to sinners. It's good news to people who need help. Its good news to people who are broken. And that's why we want to always check our heart to make sure that they're pointed towards the Lord. If you've never made a decision for the Lord, make it today. You may not get a second chance. Choose the Lord. Choose Him today. It doesn't have to be a prayer; it can be, but make a decision to follow Christ with all your heart and you'll never be the same. Father, we thank you and we love you, and we thank you for your word. And we thank you for your spirit. And we thank you, Lord that wherever your spirit is, there's freedom and life. And so we ask, Father that even now, for those under the sound of my voice, I pray that you'd break chains, I pray that you'd enlighten our minds and our hearts, I pray that you'd put wind in our sails, I pray that you'd teach us what we need to know. Give us wisdom, give us life. Lord, move us in the direction of our purpose and calling, and most of all, Lord, we love you. Let our lives glorify your name and I pray, God that we could enjoy you all the days of our lives; it's in Jesus' name we pray, amen.

BENEDICTION – Bobby Schuller

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.