

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. 11
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

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WELCOME – Bobby & Hannah Schuller

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

HS: Hello visitors and church family, it is always a joy to be with you. Did you know that there is no Christian without a miracle? Every life that comes to Jesus must come by way of a miracle. If you are in Christ, you are a miracle. And today, Christian or not, you are so loved.

BS: Well, we're just so glad that you're here wherever you're here from, because some people are in the house and some people aren't. But no matter what, we're just grateful that you're gathered with us today and we believe God has a good word for you. Father, we come to you in the very strong name of Jesus, and we ask today that you would open and enlighten our hearts to see the world the way you see it. Help us to see people that we don't get along with the way you see them; that they're loved by you. Help us to see that we live in a spiritual world with material results. Help us to come under the authority, power and life of the kingdom of the heavens today, and we ask this all in the very strong name of Jesus, amen.

HS: Amen.

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

SCRIPTURE – 2. Corinthians 10:3-5 - Hannah Schuller

In preparation for the message 2nd Corinthians 10:3-5: For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of this world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretention that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ. Church family, as we submit to God, we have been given the power to set the oppressed free and to break every bondage. Amen.

INTERVIEW – Bonnie Gray (BG) & Bobby Schuller (BS)

Bonnie Gray is an author and inspirational speaker who loves to encourage women and discuss topics relating to emotional and spiritual care. Her new book, *Sweet Like Jasmine: Finding Identity in a Culture of Loneliness*, looks at her life and how she embarked on a journey of finding belonging in Christ after uncovering a hidden family secret.

BS: Bonnie hi!

BG: Hi Bobby, it's so good to be here with you.

BS: It's such a joy to have you in the house. For those who don't know you, we're excited about your new book, *Sweet Like Jasmine*. Tell us a little bit about your faith journey.

BG: Well, I grew up in San Francisco Chinatown. My mother was a mail order bride from Hong Kong and my father was a busboy in a noodle shop. Both my parents immigrated here so it's an immigrant story of faith, of high overcome, hard times, growing up in poverty, and yet God lifted me up and God lifts all of us up. He sees all of us, even especially when we're lonely, and we seem like no one can see us. God sees us.

BS: Yes, that's awesome. What inspired you to write this book?

BG: Well, it's interesting, I really love stories and yet so many of us feel like we have to hide those down in the valley moments, right? We like to talk about the mountain tops. And so, for myself, I kind of always hid those parts of my life that felt broken. My father left when I was seven years old. Kind of when I went to school, I was cheerful Bonnie, but when I stepped through the way back home all those things that were happening in my family, kind of my family culture was about staying quiet. And so later as I became a mom, and I had two boys of my own, I realized that I needed to find out where was my father? Why did he leave? Because one day my children are going to ask me – where is grandpa and when did we come to America? And those are questions that I couldn't answer, Bobby, because I never had the courage to ask them before. But God said Bonnie, those missing pieces of your story, they're important to me and I want you to find the answers.

So that started me to find my father, and I wanted to write about this story about what happened, because I think all of us are lonely in different ways. We all kind of hide the things that we think might be embarrassing or shameful, but yet God says no, your story matters. So, I wrote this book to empower everyone to know God loves you, God cares about you, there's nothing that's shameful when God's love shines His light in it, and He can make something beautiful, even though it was broken in the moment we experienced the pain. God's love heals the broken places.

BS: That's right. And you probably felt so much like growing up, as you discovered a lot of these things that you didn't like about yourself, you probably felt a lot of shame, didn't feel like you could speak anymore, but a big part of your discovery was discovering that I really do have something to give, I have something to say, and I really do matter in God's kingdom.

BG: Yes, God brings people in those times when we're suffering the most, and that's what I love about God's family. When I felt ashamed, I experienced sexual assault during college, it was something that surprised me of somebody that I thought I was safe. Later on, I experienced panic attacks, I'd never had them before, after I became a mom and a lot of women go through that, as well. Those are two things. One out of three women experience loneliness. One out of five women experience sexual assault. And yet because we're believers, and you know Bobby, I'm a Bible teacher in my own church. I do Bible study trainings. It's very hard when you're a believer and you feel like gosh, these things I've gone through, I don't want people to judge me. I don't want them to think like I did something wrong and so you kind of cover it up. But God brought people who went through those things, and then they asked me, and they cared for me, so I want to do the same. That's my life passion. I want to come alongside and share my story so that other women can shine and share their stories. That's how we're going to heal the world. That's how we become a light. Not because we have perfect lives, but because God loves us in our mess and in perfection. So, I will boast in my weakness because God's strength is the power in my life. So, I have no shame now because God loves me. And so, I just pray that every woman, every man will be able to stand up and say this is my story, and God loves me, and He loves you, too.

BS: Amen. What do you hope that people will really get? Like what kind of encouragement do you think people will get if they read your book?

BG: Well, we all know that God is close to the brokenhearted. In Psalm 34, verse 18 it says "the Lord is close to the brokenhearted. He saves those who are crushed in spirit." So those who read this book Sweet Like Jasmine, I want them to feel God's love. God cares about our broken hearts. And then for those who have been on the other side of healing, I want to empower men and women to know that God can use you as a light. This is what's different about us as Christians is that we don't have to pretend that we have it all. I mean that's what the world does. The world says I have authority because I know it all and I can teach you everything, follow me. But we are different. We're saying I don't know it all, I've experienced brokenness, but I am following the one who knows me, loves me, and He loves you, too.

So those are the two things is my prayer and my motivation to share these stories. And they're hard stories to share. I had not shared these stories with my children even, Bobby. My children Josh and Caleb are 13 and 15, and I thought maybe one day when they become parents themselves, maybe I might share these stories with them. And my children I thought gosh, what are they going to think of me? And instead, they said mom, wow, God is amazing. You're so brave. So, Bobby, it was kind of the opposite of what I feared. So even in my own life, I'm still learning and growing.

BS: I love it, thank you so much. The book is called Sweet Like Jasmine. If you need an encouragement, maybe you've been through a hard time and you want to hear a story of somebody who's overcome, I want to recommend you get Bonnie Gray's book. Bonnie, thank you so much for joining us today!

BG: Thank you so much, Bobby!

BS: God bless you.

DECLARATION – Bobby Schuller

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

MESSAGE – Bobby Schuller "Power Over Darkness"

I want to encourage you today that God is doing things behind the scenes in your life that you just can't see, and the things that He's doing for you are good. Do not interpret God through your circumstances, but rather interpret your circumstances through the goodness and faithfulness of God. You are an unceasing spiritual being with an eternal destiny in God's great universe. And may I say we live in a great universe. Many of us will learn this before we die, but all of us will learn this the day we die that behind everything that exists, there's a veil, and behind that veil is a spiritual world that none of us really understand that is having a big impact on very small things in your life, actually. And we're going to talk about that today. God can break addiction in your life just like that, for some of us it's a process, but for some of you, He'll just take it away. God can heal people miraculously. God can put new people in your life that you need right when you need it. God can use you to transform history, even though, even though, even though. In the kingdom of God, we recognize that its inverse of what the world has. The world says if you're good looking and powerful and wealthy that you'll make a difference. But we see in the kingdom of God that God loves to use people that seem weak, people that seem less than to have a positive and good impact on history. So, behind everything that's going on in your life, there's all this stuff going on that you can't see. But you live long enough in a life of prayer, you begin to see how God was working at things all along. I want to get in your mind today that we live in a material world that has a spiritual world behind it. This is not a ridiculous idea, and this is not an idea that's been say thrown out by scientists. I think there are a lot of vocal atheistic scientists who will sort of act like this is the agreed upon rule in the scientific community. Let me tell you it's not. Find a scientist and just ask them. I remember when I first realized this, I've told this story before, but it had a big impact on my life in a big way. I've always had a respect for the academic community, and I've always enjoyed school and.. no, I haven't enjoyed school; I take that back. I've enjoyed good teachers. There are bad teachers in school, you see. There's a mix of both. And I remember when Rich Mouw, who at the time was the president of my seminary; I didn't realize how big of an honor it was, invited me to go with him to a gathering of intellectuals at the Harvard Club in New York called Bio Logos. I got there a little bit late, and it was surprise because the gathering was a couple hundred mostly scientists, almost all of them were from University of Harvard or Harvard College.

The others were from little universities called M.I.T., Cambridge and Oxford. Those are the four universities that represented. And all of the scientists that were there were Christians, and when I say Christian, I don't mean like Anglican like the king of England, I mean when I walked into the Harvard Club, which is something I didn't even know existed, it's a big building in Manhattan in New York, beautiful building, old place. And they had this big dining hall that they had reserved somehow. And I walked in, and I saw all of these prestigious evolutionary biologists and physicists, geneticists, astrophysicists with their hands in the air like a bunch of Pentecostals singing hymns and spiritual songs in resounding flat and sharp tones, Irene. They weren't good singers. They didn't care. It was so moving to look around and understand that in this group were professors, some of the smartest people in the whole world were a bunch of bleeding-heart worshippers. Maybe they had seen something I hadn't seen. In that group were people like the lady that, at the time, was running the Hubble telescope who told me she was an Hour of Power viewer, which is great. If you're still watching, hi, good to see you again. Francis Collins, who headed up the human genome project who has his own testimony of being an atheist and coming to faith after delving into the world of science. And it was so wonderful because obviously to be professors at Harvard, they not only had to be intelligent, they had to be good researchers and good teachers, and many of them were giving speeches and lectures and such. One person gave this very mind-bending speech about space. I'll do my best to repeat it. She said time is the fastest thing in the universe. It's the constant, I guess, and we actually have two rocket scientists in the balcony so I'm a little worried about messing this up. But there's this constant, the speed of light and she showed this video of a spaceship going around the earth at the speed of light, and it would go kind of like.. it looked about like this speed which seems very fast. And she said well, the time it would take the light from the moon to get here would be about a second and a third, or something like that. And then she said the time it would take for the light to get from the sun to the earth would be about eight and a half minutes. So that means that when you see the sun in the sky, it's not really there. It's like off a little bit because the light that's coming from the sun takes a minute to get to you. So, in other words the next time you see a sunset and you want to be annoying, you can look at the person with you and go it already set eight and a half minutes ago. It's like down farther. And if you're on Pluto and say its two o'clock in the afternoon in Pluto, it was a very cold day, the sun's already set. The further you get, the more it takes for the light from the thing you're looking at in space to get to you, even though it's going the speed of light. So alpha centauri, which is the closest star to our solar system, it takes the light.. I'm going to.. I wrote it down: four point three years to get to you. So, it's not even there, wherever. And the light that you're seeing is four years old. And the light that's in the star in our galaxy that's the closest that you can see is seventy-five hundred light years away – meaning the light you're seeing in the sky is seven thousand five hundred years old. That star might not even be there anymore. And if you were on that star and had a telescope powerful enough to see earth, you would see like the prehistoric era. You'd see a bunch of cavemen walking around with spears and such. And if you waited long enough, you'd be able to see Jesus around the year zero. Isn't that weird? And then the Milky Way galaxy is a hundred thousand light years across, is that right? So, if you're on one side of the galaxy and you can see the other side of the galaxy, the light that you're seeing is from a hundred thousand years ago. And the distance of the whole universe is billions of light years. Like I think it was 43 billion light years, or something like that. So, everything that you're seeing, it's taken all this time.. it's not even there anymore. And then the real mindbender, she was saying that the universe is continually expanding like this, and I didn't quite understand, I said what do you mean its expanding, and I raised my hand, I was like so its expanding into outer space? And she says no, space is what's expanding. And I said expanding into what? She said, well, nothing, there's nothing there. And I said space is nothing. She was like no, there's no space, it's just expanding. And I was like I'm sorry, I'm the dummy in the room, I know all of you are smart, I'm the idiot seminarian.

You mean if I got in a spaceship and went to the edge of the universe and like poked my hand through, imagine it's The Truman Show. Like what do I walk into? What's back there? She goes nothing. And everybody laughs. But not space. No! I'll tell you. Nobody really knows, right? How can you know? How can you know what that is? Maybe its God. Francis Collins actually said something like that. He said that we scientists have been climbing this mountain and now as we're making these revolutionary discoveries in the 20th and 21st century, we get to the very top only to see a bunch of theologians who have been sitting there for a thousand years. The remarkable thing about that story actually is not all of the things I told you, it's that when people study things like these smartest people in the world, many of them come to the conclusion that there's a spiritual world behind the material world and that that spiritual world is in the loving grasp and hands of God. If you're listening to me today, don't listen to smart people who seem to know everything about you and everywhere your life is going to go and it's not good. Listen to me. Listen to me. God knows about your future and your life, and He cares. Very often when we start to do things the world's way, we start to mess up or delay the good things that God has in store for us. And so today we can relax, we can know we're forgiven, that we're loved, and begin to pray in a way that we actually believe this stuff. That we really believe God is behind the scenes doing a good work in your life and He is. I've done this before, but I need like four or five choir members. Whoever you are, let's see if it's the same people from the first service. Can be a new group. Its whoever you want, but you're going to be sitting for about five minutes. All right, anybody? Four or five, six. Stef is bowing out on this one. It's all dudes. Just come here, just come sit, face the screen. So, I've showed you this before, but it's good to remember this is Plato's allegory of the cave. Plato is trying to describe his view of the world and the universe and he says in this bizarre cave, there are a bunch of men and women, just people that have been chained, they were kind of/sort of born here and imagine their backs are against a wall, and what they're seeing are reflections on a cave wall caused by a fire that's behind them, but they don't know the fire is there and they don't know that various objects and people are there. And what they do is they all sit here, hello Mr. Strange. They all sit here, and they debate what these shadows are, and in their view, this is reality. You guys.. you want some blocking, you can kind of point and you're talking to each other, and you look like a bunch of dummies because you're like this is reality, this is the real life. And Plato says that all of a sudden, a man's chains come free, a man wearing a blue jacket that's too small for him and he turns around and he sees the fire and he sees these objects, he sees these people and he's like woah, wait a second. What's going on here? And then he sees a pin of light on the far distance and begins to walk towards that light, and its actually the opening of the cave and he goes outside, and he sees all this like amazing stuff that he's never even heard of before. It looks similar to the shadows, but its better; its better and it's amazing. It's a sun, he's never seen a sun before, birds and a tree, mountains, grass. Keep in mind, he doesn't have a word for the color blue. He doesn't have a word for tree or bird, only things that kind of link to stuff that we've seen in the shadows. And so, he finds this whole new amazing life that until this moment, was hidden to him, and had heard about, but just thought was ridiculous. So, he's living in this place full of joy and full of life, and then Plato says that all of a sudden, he gets a ping of guilt because he remembers his friends in the cave and he wants to go set them free. So, he goes back to the cave at some personal risk, goes into the cave and keep in mind, imagine it's a bright summer day at noon and you walk into a deep part of a cave, what happens? Imagine going into a dark room, for example, what would happen? Your eyes haven't adjusted and so as he walks in, he trips, and all of his friends laugh at him because he can't see. And then he tells them my friends, these things you're seeing on the.. it's not real. This is not real at all. There's something very real and it's out there. But he can't even see his friends, he can kind of see things around.

He's trying to describe trees and mountains and things, but he doesn't have words for it, so he's saying like there's this color and it's not yellow, and it's not black, it's like somewhere in-between but brighter and somehow prettier, and all of his friends just look at him like he's crazy. Okay, thank you guys. So, Plato's cave is a look into Plato's view of the world, is actually is foundational to western education, actually, because within it is skepticism, and the skepticism isn't just towards the Pantheon of gods, the skepticism is also towards a naturalistic view of the world. You remember in Plato's day, it's like the whole earth is flat, and this was sort of a scientific view of the world, everything under the earth was water, and everything above the earth was the sun, and the earth was fixed, and the sun was moving. And it caused this way of thinking is like what if we look deeper, what if we look under, what if we look over, what if there's something behind. And Plato believed kind of in a God, in one God like a monotheist. I don't have time to get into it now, but its key to understand that many of us.. I would say this, there's one of three perspectives of the universe. One, of what we know, less is true. Of what we know, we're exactly right, or of what we know, more is true. Who here really thinks that everything we know is exactly the amount we can know? And most of us don't think there's less. Isn't that great? So, I believe that the despair that so many people are facing today is the sort of flatness of a materialistic view of life. That all that there is all we can know, and that there's nothing underneath. And I know, I know that there is more, and I know, although it can be vague sometimes and religion doesn't give us all the answers, that there is built inside of us a desire to know more about that deeper part of the spiritual world. And so much of our despair comes when we're out of touch with that world. And yet when we look back, many of us can see many ways in which God worked in spiritual ways to change material things in our lives. And by the way, many Christians make this mistake, too, where its only about studying, reading; its only about listening to sermons, but not about really walking in its power now. And maybe this is just for one person here. Everybody else is just.. I lost them when I started talking about hundred thousand light years or something. Maybe there's somebody here that's really wants to walk in this. The first thing we have to do is one, believe.. and you can almost.. can you feel it? Like if you close your eyes and you kind of just.. I can do this and maybe you can, too, but you can feel it, if you just stop for a second, you can feel that world under the world that we're in. It's there. And things are happening right now in your life. So, when we pray, we can understand that that spiritual world is under the complete control of God. It's the kingdom of the heavens, and that God is at work in all the aspects of our life. In other words, we can be hopeful people and for good reason. In Luke 10, Jesus sends the apostles out, they've been studying under Him, and now they have come under His authority and power, meaning that they believe that what He says is true, and they begin to act on it. They actually begin to love their enemies; they actually begin to trust in dark times, that even though it seems in the natural this boat is going to sink, that maybe Jesus taking a nap isn't a bad idea. They begin to not worry, they begin to grow in power, and so He sends them out. And when they come back, they say that they were doing miracles like He was, and they were even able to cast out demons, which I know is a word that can mess with some of us, hopefully I have time to talk about that, but they were able to cast out these dark spirits and Jesus says to them in that moment, "behold I saw Satan fall from the heavens like lightning." Quick observation: Jesus doesn't say that after the crucifixion or the resurrection, He doesn't say it on Pentecost, He says it the moment His disciples decide to believe and walk in the authority He gave them. Your body is the greatest touch point between the material world and a spiritual world. Your body is the greatest touch point between the kingdom of God, the kingdom of the heavens, and this world that everybody else experiences. When they began to walk in His power, that's when Satan fell because they just really believed it and they really just tried it. In your life, it's easy to feel like is any of this real. Is God really doing anything in my life? And so often all we have to do is posture our bodies in a way that we want to also not ignore what's happening around us, but also ask the Lord, what are you doing?

What are you doing behind all of that? What are you doing behind what I can see? And if we can give ourselves spiritual ears, we can understand sometimes what God's doing, and its good. It gives us hope and gives us peace and allows us to walk every day in an unhurried, in the unhurried yoke of Jesus. Think about this for a minute. We have all sorts of passages of demons or dark spirits that seem to have influence or seem to burden people. I want to be careful and not assume that for example because my son has epilepsy he's possessed by a demon, or because you have a depression or an addiction that you're possessed or governed by an evil spirit. But I also don't want to rule out that you're not. I know there are people who struggled with things all their lives for years and years, and one day they prayed; they prayed millions of times, but one day God just took it away from them. I know that. I hope that gives you hope. Addictive behavior, I met a girl who she went in and out of her struggle with heroin, and then one day the Lord just took it away from her. It's hard not to think, and maybe I'm wrong, that there's something very spiritual about that. And the reason I hope that gives you hope is don't feel guilty or don't feel like oh, I have a demon in my life, but also feel that there might be a spiritual aspect, maybe it's not a demon thing, but a spiritual thing about this that God can handle. And somehow, like the Chinese finger trap I talked about last week, its only when we're at peace with these things in our life that they actually go away. Sometimes it's only when we're at peace with the fact I can't handle this thing on me, and even still I'm worthy of love and belonging, even still I can do good things in this world, even still God loves me. And there's something when you really believe grace, and you push into the Chinese finger trap instead of trying to pull your fingers out, somehow that's what you need to unlock, some of us, to unlock your destiny. In the book of Acts, there's a story that Paul has this little girl, she's like six to ten years old, and it says that she's a fortune teller. The word there is that she has a python spirit, and the reason they said a fortune teller is a python spirit was like the oracle of Delphi. This is one of the most famous places in the whole ancient world. Everybody wanted to go here. In order to see the oracle, you had to pay the equivalent of tons of money, and they would have a slave girl in there who was breathing in ethaline, she would get high and then she would speak a prophetic word over you. But keep in mind that the belief was there was a python spirit, a snake, a serpent. What does that sound like? That there was a serpent giving her these words, you see? And that that serpent in this case was from Apollo, that Apollo who was this great god, slayed the serpent and actually what was happening is the decaying smell of the serpent was coming up, and that's what gave this girl her words. In other words, that the girl was possessed by either Apollo or this python. When Paul sees that, he just commands it to get out of her life. Get out of her! Get out of her! Boom, its gone. And she is completely set free, and her slave owners freak out because now they no longer have like a little oracle that they can take around and make money from. And so, because of this, the leader of Philippi takes Paul and Silas, puts them in the deepest part of the prison, over them they put a chief jailer who gets paid extra for their brutality. And they're in the stocks, they've been beaten and whipped. Its pitch black, you can't see anything, and in the middle of all of that, Paul and Silas are just worshipping and praising God. Here's how I've often heard that passage taught. I've often heard it like when you go through tough times, try to worship God. Try to worship God harder, or something like that. But that is not what I see when I read the text. I don't see Paul and Silas trying to do anything, they're not faking anything, they have seen God work in their lives so many times, they're just not worried about it. They're just assuming somehow God's going to.. it's an assumption. God's going to use this to do something great. Great! They're not faking anything, they're not pretending like they're not bleeding, it's that their reward is so.. you know what it reminds me of? It reminds me of Mr. Beast. Mr. Beast, a YouTuber, and like I saw this thing where these kids, they had to stand up in a circle and whoever's the last one to win got a million dollars. And there they're all standing for days struggling, horrible, right?

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You think they'd be depressed, and they're all like laughing and high fiving and having a grand old time, even though physically they're struggling. Why? Because they know a reward is coming. You think that didn't factor for Paul and Silas hanging there in the stockades? They believed that something amazing was about to happen. So, they're just going to praise God in advance. There is a difference between that and you going through a hard time, and just being I'm going to worship God through it. Maybe that's a good thing to do, but I want to say that their praise was a result of something they really believed. They really, really believed it. When you're in your deepest moment, can you promise me something? Promise me that you will quiet your heart, that you will rest, and you will just ask the Lord, Lord, help me trust that even though the worst thing in my life has happened, I can trust that you will turn it too good. Lord, let my life be a testimony that there is no tragedy that is outside of your good hand. That there is no child that is outside of your loving gaze. And that there is no story that is not yet unwritten. Remember what C.S. Lewis said? He said we cannot go to the beginning and change how everything that happened, but we can start where we are right now, and we can change the ending. Pray, Lord, do a good work in my life. It's been hard at this point, but I trust that no matter what I see in the material, I believe that behind the curtain firmament of the universe there is a spiritual world at which you are doing good works on behalf of me and the people I love. I will just trust it the same way I trust when I turn a light switch on that electricity will turn on. I don't know how to make electricity, but I will trust that in that same way, if I look to you, Lord, you'll sort it out for me, and He will. Man, does He love you so much. He loves you. Things are going to be okay, my friend. We can be at peace today, and we can ask that through all these tough times, God would give us the kind of power that Paul and Silas and the disciples had, that we begin to see a real trust and work in that world. So, Father, we love you so much. We pray in Jesus' name, Lord, that you'd transform our hearts and minds into the image of Christ, it's in your name we pray, amen.

BENEDICTION – Bobby Schuller

BS: Thank you so much for coming today. We love you, and we hope that today was a relaxing and good experience for you, and that the Holy Spirit touched your life.

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