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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. I am so, so excited to have my friend Lisa Bevere with us here this morning.

HS: And welcome visitors, welcome church family. It is a joy, as always, to have you here. I hadn't originally planned on sharing this today, just when I woke up I felt like the Lord put it on my heart. But something that I feel is just as important as when we confess our sins to God is to also believe by faith that we are forgiven.

So when you confess your sins and then later down the road you're feeling guilt and shame for those things, that is not of the Lord. When you confess your sins with a pure heart, God says that He justifies you. Do you know what that word justifies means? It means just as if I'd never done it. Just as if I'd never done it! So when you pray and ask the Lord to forgive you from a sincere heart, you can feel joy and gratitude when you finish. There is so much power in receiving by faith God's forgiveness. So even today as we worship, let's be full of joy and gratitude that we are now the righteousness of God in Christ. Amen?

BS: Amen. Stand with us, Lord Jesus, we pray. We take our crowns off our heads and we lay them before your throne because we can trust and know that your rule in our lives is better than our rule in our lives. We pray that you'd help us to do the next right thing, and to trust that as we obey you and live in your kingdom, that things will be the way they should. We know that you have the best in mind for us, so we trust you and we pray it 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 – Hebrews 12,1-2 - Hannah Schuller

Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him, he endured the cross, scorning its shame and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Amen.

DECLARATION – Bobby Schuller

Well whoever you are, would you please stand with us? We're going to say this creed together as we do every single Sunday. Hold your hands out like this as a way of receiving from the Lord. 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. Its 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.

INTRO TO LISA BEVERE – Bobby Schuller

Well, I think our guest needs no introduction today. I am so, so excited to have my friend Lisa Bevere with us here this morning. Lisa's an author, a speaker. She's the co-founder of Messenger International, a ministry that impacts millions around the world. She speaks to women often to help them find their identity in Christ, and man, we have just been so blessed to have Lisa here in the house multiple times as an interview guest. Today's the first day she's going to be preaching to us. Would you please welcome with me, Lisa Bevere

MESSAGE – Lisa Bevere "Focus"

Good morning! How are you doing? Are you guys awake? I need you to be awake. I need you to be awake. I'm super excited about being here. I have loved this church from afar for a really long time. My husband and I met Dr. Schuller, we actually drove him around when we were in our twenties, and I remember that he took the time to talk to us. He told us things that had such weight and intent behind it that when I woke up this morning, I thought wow, I'm now in my sixties – I'm probably the same age he was when I met him when I was in my twenties. And so I love this house, I love Shepherd's Grove, I love what you're doing for your community, and I love Hour of Power. But I'm going to show you the people I love the very most and that is my family. I am the mother of four sons and the grandmother to five, so I'm going to show you right there, this is my third-born son Alexander. He is my only son that is single; that needs to change. Then I have my second born son Austin who is married to the beautiful Jessica. My fourth-born son Arden, who is married to Christian, in case he forgets what he is. Lizzie, the lioness, my wild rogue child. You know when you have that child that.. actually you don't birth but it becomes your grandchild that your mom said I hope you have a daughter just like you, that's Lizzie. And so I had to write a book to help that. Sophia, my sweet Sophia hugging my husband of 39 years, John Bevere, next month, myself, my beautiful Texas daughter-in-law hugging my first-born Texas-born son, that's why they could get married, Asher, my first-born grandson and he is holding August. Now I want to tell you about Asher. Asher is a 39-year-old man trapped in a 12-year-old's body. We took him to Disney World and he had the brochure spread out, like on the little tray, and he was like 'is this ride going to be dark? Will they turn me upside down because I don't want to go upside down. Will people be screaming? Will you scream? I don't like it when people scream.' And so when we're at the baggage claim, John pulls me aside and said 'we better start out slow with Asher. He could have a meltdown on the very first ride and it will be end of the day.' But John is Italian and I am Sicilian. Italians are known for feeding people. Sicilians are known for killing people. So we have a little bit of a different parenting style. I said we're not going to start out slow. I'm going to find out what the scariest ride in Disney World is and we're doing that one first. Most people agreed it was the dinosaur ride. I knew it was pretend and I closed my eyes at least three times. We got off the ride, Asher looked at me and he said 'g-mama, that was terrifying, and that was fun.' Welcome to being a Christian in 2021. It is terrifying, and it is fun, but you were not made for It's a Small World. You were made for the Avatar ride. You were made for another time and another place, and as I read scripture, it says that you and I are just passing through. And a lot of us, we're under the mistaken impression that we could be heroes without a battle. Now I have one more person to show you. I need to show you Scarlett Elizabeth. I got my fifth grandbaby at the end of July. There she is. She's an Amazon – eight pounds, fifteen ounces, twenty-one and a half inches long. And the exciting thing is now that I have three granddaughters, the scales are balanced. We have equal number of females and males in the Bevere household. So I actually am super honored to be here and speak to you as a dual citizen. I am an Italian citizen and an American citizen, so I think I should qualify to speak to you as a godmother. Do you all think that's okay? See godmothers are people that come into our lives and begin to close these gaps that we have. You know that gap between the way things are and the way they should be. A gap between the way your marriage is, and the way it could be. Godmothers are godparents was an idea that the early church came up with because when people got saved, they lost everything. They were cut off by their family, they lost their social status, they lost their economic status, and so godparents would come alongside of them and say I'm going to take personal responsibility for your spiritual growth. See a godmother is someone like me that can say yeah, I remember I wanted to kill my husband when we had been married ten years, but now that we've been married 39, I really like the guy. They can say I know that this hard season can be a season of remaking you.

Focus

See the truth is, historically the church does better in seasons of hardship than seasons of ease. But it is going to be necessary for all of us to focus if we are going to close some of these gaps. I'm going to read a quote to you from Zig Ziglar. He makes me sound smart so I'm going to quote him. He says "I don't care how much power, brilliance or energy you have. If you don't harness it and focus it on a specific target and hold it there, you are never going to accomplish as much as your ability warrants." See our focus, the one that is worthy of our full attention is Jesus. And it is very difficult to become more like Jesus when we are looking everywhere else. We live in a time period where there is an abundance of distraction. Everyone is look here, listen to this, see what's going on. We don't even know what to believe anymore. And in times where we don't know what to believe, we can look to the one who has never lied. We can look to the one who is the way, the truth and the life. I know there's a lot of people that want to have their own truth, but Jesus is the truth. And the truth is not a what, the truth is a who. And so He deserves to have our focus. Hebrews 12:2, I'm going to read it out of The Message paraphrase. Says, "Keep your eyes on Jesus who both began and finished this race we're in." You know John and I have been in the ministry for more than three decades, and we have found there's a lot of people who begin but don't finish. There's a lot of people that start smart and end up stupid. But never, if you are looking at Jesus. See Jesus is our pattern who began and finished. "He never lost sight of where He was headed – that exhilarating finish in and with God." See we don't finish alone. We finish in and with God. "Because of that, He could put up with anything along the way: the cross, shame, whatever. And now He is there in the place of honor right alongside of the Father." Focus redirects our abilities and our energies, and what we focus on is what we become. What you behold is what you become. The friends you keep company with is what you end up reflecting. So I want to be more like Jesus, which means I'm going to have to be intentional to redirect my focus. Romans 12:2 says, "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect." How many of you have ever gone through menopause? Okay, I know the men here haven't, but you kind of did. You went through it with someone. Okay, I just came through menopause. I'm 61 and I'm just going to say, going through menopause, there's a crazy woman in your brain. There's a crazy woman that says begin screaming on the airplane. Begin to hit your husband. And I had to say no, crazy woman, you will not have the final say in my life. I'm going to have to renew my mind because I am not this hormonal ship. Also, how many of you know that we live in a day and a time where there's a lot of things that sound good, but feel wrong. You have to be able to know the word of God and rightly divide. That is what gives us the ability to discern what is good, acceptable and perfect. You and I have to be a people who read the word until the word begins to read us. So that we have eyes to see what is really going on, because the natural tendency for all of us is to drift. I have a real challenge staying on task. I would rather do anything than finish a manuscript. I have to put myself in a corner with headphones on so that I can see nothing, because if I see anything or hear anything happening, I'm going to go out there and try to be part of it. I have to discipline myself to be focused. And we are in a time that requires that focus. 1st Thessalonians chapter 1 verses 4-6. Again, I'm going to read it out of The Message. This is Paul talking to the church of Thessaloniki. He says, "It is clear to us, friends, that God not only loves you very much, but has also put His hand on you for something special." See God loves us but there is a special anointing that God has on His people in times of confusion. It is God's time for His people to understand that He has His hand on them in this season. He said "when the Message we preached came to you, it wasn't just words. Something happened in you. The Holy Spirit put steel in your convictions. You paid careful attention to the way we lived among you and determined to live that way yourself. In imitating us, you imitated the Master. Although great trouble accompanied the Word, you were able to take great joy from the Holy Spirit, taking the trouble with joy, and the joy with trouble."

People are watching how we navigate this season. They are saying come on, what is going to be different about the people of God? See we are people that understand that in a season of hardship, in a season of trouble, we can still have joy because the joy of the Lord is our strength, not our circumstances. So I am a boy mom; you saw the photos. So pretty much all of my movie interests have been male-driven movies: Justice League, all the super heroes. And so I'm going to share my favorite example on focus from Man of Steel. Man of Steel is all about Superman, and basically he's flashing back to when all of his super powers come into play. He's about an eight-year-old boy, he's in a classroom and the teacher is asking him a question that he actually knows the answer to. But because he no longer just sees his teacher, he sees in his teacher. He can see her heart beating, he can see her lungs, he can hear the clock, he is overwhelmed by just the sound of a pencil tapping on a desk. He is so overstimulated that he runs outside into the hallway, shuts himself into the janitor closet, and they call for his momma. And when his mom shows up, she says okay I'm here. How can I help you? And he says mom, the world is just too big. And she says to him, then make it smaller. I'm saying this to you right now. If your world feels overwhelming, you are the gatekeeper of your life. You have every right to make it smaller, and smaller doesn't mean less. Smaller means you can focus on the things that are the most important. Too often we allow strangers to have more access to our life than the people that we can see face to face. I was recently on a train connecting like in Atlanta airport and you get on the train plane trains, and I'm on it and I'm watching – everybody's got their phone, they're all looking down, they're all looking at their phone, nobody's looking at each other, when all of a sudden Montell Jordan comes on. I'm like I know who that is. That's Montell Jordan. I'm like Montell, this is how we do it. And we start talking to each other, we exchange phone numbers. Everybody else is oblivious to what's going on in that moment because they are bowing their head to a world they can hold in their hands. And God is saying to His people: I need you to step outside. Because sometimes when we step outside of this, we see this realm of a God of the creator of the universe, and outside something inside of us gets quickened and ignited. Your inability to connect with everything that is coming your way is not a failure. It is a fail-safe. We were not meant to process all of this stuff and respond to all of these demands. We have to know what the most important things are in this moment. And as a grandmother, I'm going to tell you I might have a really hard time seeing small print, but my ability to see things at a distance increases every single year, and I see a glorious rising for the church of Jesus Christ. I believe that we're going to push aside the things that divide us, and we're going to remember that there is more that unites us than what divides us. And so we need to be a people that say I'm going to make those small adjustments. I'm going to pay the right attention to the one who actually gave His life for me. That I'm going to be that person that isn't constantly allowing more voices to have preeminence than His word. 2nd Peter chapter 3 verse 1 says, "My dear friends, this is now the second time I've written to you, both letters reminders to hold your minds in a state of undistracted attention." See you and I are in charge of what holds our mind. It isn't how entertaining it is. It's what we choose to be attentive to, and Peter is saying there's an urgency here. People, it's time to focus. This is the day that you and I were hand chosen for. And the enemy is trying to distract you so that you do not know who you are becoming. I have found that the enemy will always remind us of our past to prevent our future. He is looking at a people that he is so afraid that they'll wake up and understand who they are in Jesus Christ. So he talks about who you've been, but God knows who you are becoming. We are becoming a people who are focused and a people who understand there is a destiny. I love that I get to write books. I make a lot more sense in my books because someone actually edits me. I will send my chapters in one way and they come back completely different. I believe punctuation is optional. My editor does not believe in that. She's like that's a run-on sentence. And so she'll come back and she'll say I took out all this peripheral over here.

I don't know if you were sleep deprived, jet lagged, I don't know what was going on, but that didn't make any sense. What she will do is take off the excess so what is important is highlighted. And how many of you know that most of the body of Christ does not fight about the really important things. We fight on the non-essential peripheral things. So I'm going to give you a couple of examples. This is not an exhaustive list. So there's essentials and non-essentials. So a non-essential would be whether women can preach or not. Obviously this church is like we're okay with women. So the gender of the person that preaches is a non-essential, but what is essential is that Christ is preached. So it's not as a package, it's the message that is essential. A non-essential is how we worship. This worship today was magnificent. I love that I could watch violin and choir and oh my gosh, it was just all woven together with such majesty and strength. But do you know there are some churches that would say musical instruments are evil. And so there would be a problem there. So the style of worship is a non-essential but who we worship is an essential. And we have to worship Him in spirit and in truth. Non-essential – how we look. How we look. That's a non-essential. How I look to everybody else is a non-essential, but how I live, that is an essential. Non-essential – our accomplishments. Do you know that one of my books is a New York Times best-selling book? Do you know what happens when you have a New York Times best-selling book? Absolutely nothing. Absolutely nothing. You don't get a call, you don't get an email, I don't have a certificate. You guys could have New York Times best-selling books and you just didn't know it. Nothing happens. What if I had spent my whole life focused on if I had a New York Times, then my life would be fulfilled. No, no, no, no. God is not excited about the books I sell. He is more excited about the books I sow. And so there is a different economy between earth and heaven. Non-essential – this one's a hard for me as a Sicilian: my opinions. Non-essential. I think I've got really good opinions. I think my husband should think I have really good opinions, but God is like yeah in the scheme of things, your opinions are not a big deal. I will say there were things I would have fought for ten years ago that I may not even believe anymore. What is essential is the truth. Non-essential – our identity in culture. Guys, guys, it could be a problem to be a Christian pretty soon. Our identity in culture, that's a non-essential. Our identity in Christ, that is the essential. Non-essential – what we have. Essential – what we give. Non-essential – unity of doctrine. Hey, I've been married to my husband 39 years and there's a couple things we don't even agree on in doctrine, but the unity of faith, oh yeah, we all have a unity of faith. There is way more that unites us than what divides us. Non-essential – what we eat. My husband will not touch bacon for the world. I believe that bacon is a blessing from God and so I will eat bacon. The Bible says bacon's not a problem. What's a problem is what you say. So it's not what we eat, but what comes out of our mouth that becomes a problem. Non-essential – what culture says. How many of you know culture is going like this. Culture is all over the place. Essential – what scripture says. Non-essential – what others do. Hey I'm a mom of four boys constantly tattling on one another. Non-essential – what others do. Essential – what I do. I'm in charge of myself. I'm not in charge of everybody else. I can't control what everybody else is doing. Non-essential – what we study. Essential – what we live. We have to be a people that don't just read the Bible. We live the Bible. Non-essential – how we've been wronged. Essential – how we forgive. We're going to have to navigate some of these dynamics in a world that is looking for the church to act like Jesus. So I didn't get saved till I was 21 years of age, and I grew up with a Bible that you weren't allowed to touch. It was like a decoration and it had like gold around it, and you couldn't read it, you couldn't touch it. And so when I found out about Jesus and that He loved me at 21 years of age, and then had children, I was so excited that I wanted scripture to be alive for them. And so I would tell my boys all sorts of stories. We would do all these different enactments late at night. And one of my favorite stories to act out with my children is found in Mark chapter 10, verses 46 – 51. It's the story of blind Bartimaeus.

Now many of you may not know this, but I lost an eye to cancer when I was five. So my right eye.. everybody's like which one, my right eye is plastic. And so anytime there's a blind person in the Bible, I'm like those are my people. These are my people; the blind people are my people. And so I would act things out with my boys so that they could see that Jesus was alive. That He wasn't just somebody on fragile Bible pages, but He was flesh and blood that came and died for us. And so there's this story of Jesus, it's His last big campaign. Sick are being healed; gospel is being preached. It's in Jericho. It's His biggest meeting and He is leaving Jericho headed for Jerusalem. And we come in and it says "And as He was leaving Jericho with His disciples and a great crowd, Bartimaeus, a blind beggar, the son of Timaeus, was sitting by the roadside. And when he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out and say, 'Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me.'" Now I want to pause here a moment. Notice it says he heard Jesus of Nazareth was walking by. But he doesn't cry out Jesus of Nazareth have mercy on me. He calls out Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me. And it said, "many rebuked him, telling him to be silent. But he cried out all the more." Why? Why? Why did they tell him to be silent? Because Jesus, Son of David, was declaring Jesus of Nazareth to be the Messiah. Jesus, Son of David, he was saying Messiah, have mercy on me. And the people were like how dare you say that. You can't call Him that. You can call Him good teacher, you can call Him from Nazareth, but you can't call Him Jesus, Son of David. But the more they rebuked him, the louder he got. And I think there's a lesson for all of us in this; the people telling you to be quiet are not the people with your answer. Don't waste your time arguing with people who do not have your solution. We can not be a people that engage with the crowds when Jesus the Messiah is in front of us. And he cries out all the more. Son of David, have mercy on me. And then I love this. "Jesus stopped." He stopped. He had set His forehead like flint to go to Jerusalem but He stopped and He said, "Call him," and they called the blind man, saying to him, 'Take heart, get up, He is calling you.' And throwing off his cloak, he sprang up and came to Jesus." I don't know if you understand what was happening here. But this man had a beggar's cloak that gave him the right to beg legally. But he understood that once he had an encounter with Jesus, Son of David, he wasn't going to be a beggar anymore. So he throws off that cloak, jumps up and Jesus says, "What do you want me to do for you?" Now I always like Jesus, the man is blind. Like.. why would you even have to ask him that question? I feel like it's kind of obvious. He needs to be able to see. But there's something very interesting in his request. He says I want to recover my sight, which means there was a time that he could see, but somewhere along the line, he lost his vision. And I feel like right now it's time for the church to cry out to Jesus, Son of David, and ask Him to help us recover our sight that we would have the right focus, that we wouldn't be looking to the right or to the left. How many of you know it's not about the election returns, it's about the elect returning. How many of you know that God is looking for a people who are called by His name to humble themselves, pray and turn from their own wicked ways. And then He said He will hear from heaven and He will heal our land. But I believe He is asking us what is it that you want? I believe that God wants to do something new. I feel like we've been in a season of pause and God is saying in this season of pause, don't come out the way you went in. God is doing a new thing, and I believe we find that new thing in Luke chapter 4, verses 18 – 19. This is Jesus talking. But when Jesus talks about the spirit of the Lord being on Him, then it becomes the declaration for the church as well. It says "The spirit of the Lord is upon me because He has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives, recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, and to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor, and to announce this is God's year to act." Can I pray a Sicilian godmother prayer over all of us? Can I get everybody just to stand to your feet right now? And I just want you to say it after me. I know I'm loud; you don't have to be quite as loud as me. But I hope that it'll be something that's in your heart.

Focus

I want you to say the spirit of the Lord is upon me because He has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor, to set at liberty those that are captive and recovering of sight to the blind. To open the ears of the deaf and to declare this is God's year of favor and this is our time to act. Father, I thank you that you will give me eyes to see the way you see things. Ears to hear the way you hear things. Words to speak that are words of life and power. Father, I thank you that the church recovers her sight, in Jesus' name, and everybody that agrees say amen and amen. Well, it's been my incredible privilege to speak to you as a godmother. I believe that I am standing in front of a lot of godmothers, and I want to expose a lie. I think a lot of times the older generation thinks that the younger generation doesn't want anything from you. And that is a lie. And we are at risk of losing the wisdom and the treasures and the lessons that you have won the hard way. See, I believe that God wants the older women and the younger women to connect. I don't know if you read what it says in Titus, but it says the older women must teach and train the younger women to love their husbands, and to train their children. But most young women are trying to train their husbands and they're loving their kids. We got to flip this and we got to open up our lives because the young women think the older women are too busy and can't be bothered. And the older women think that the young women don't want what's on them, and it is a lie. We need the older and the younger women. We need the older and the younger men. We need the sons and the daughters, we need the visions and the dreams, we need a united voice because I don't know about you, but I am hungry for something more than what I have seen, and I have every reason to believe that the best days are yet before the church of Jesus Christ. But it's going to take a united people who are focused on Jesus. And so I have the book Godmothers out there. I also have the book that was written by actually all my sons and my three daughter-in-law's. They believe that their generation needs to have a declaration of freedom, rather than a bunch of labels. So they decided to write You Are Creative, Holy, Righteous, Secure, Called, Confident and Loved. And so that's The I Am Declarations. And then I've got Lizzie the Lioness out there. But it's been an incredible honor and a privilege for me to join with you today and just see what God is doing here in Shepherd Grove. I love that you are reaching out beyond yourself and sowing to those that are so desperately hungry. God bless you.

THANK YOU TO LISA BEVERE – Bobby Schuller

Lisa Bevere, thank you so much for joining us today. It really means the world that you would come to our church and bring the word of God to so many people around the world.

BENEDICTION – Bobby Schuller

Thank you for joining us today. We know God has a great week in store for you. 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.