

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: And welcome visitors and church family. We are so happy to be with you. We hope you leave here today reminded that Jesus is the same yesterday, today and forever, and everything that Jesus did in the Bible is for you here today. You are so loved.

BS: We're so grateful that you're here with us today. It's so funny, I was like thinking about these little hands. Like they're not going to be little forever. Just stay here.. stay this size forever. Anyway, that has nothing to do with church, I just want to tell you that. We really are so glad you're here and this is a.. we're just so glad you're here and we just really want you to know. You like pirates? (COHEN – pirates of the Caribbean)

HS: Yes.

BS: That's right. Yo-ho, maties. Let's begin with a word of prayer. We love you so much, God and we pray for an outpouring of your spirit this morning or this evening, wherever we are, we just love you and we ask, God, that you would help us as we're navigating through life. Many of us are facing tough challenges today. Others of us have just had a great victory, and we want to say thank you. Wherever we are, God, we bring it before you and we thank you that its under your blessing. We love you and we thank you that you loved us first. It's in the strong name of Jesus we pray, amen.

HS: Amen.

BS: High five.

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

SCRIPTURE – Genesis 20,17-21,2 - Hannah Schuller

In preparation for the message, Genesis 20:17 through 18 into the next chapter. Then Abraham prayed to God, and God healed Abimelek, his wife and his female slaves so they could have children again. The Lord had kept all the women in Abimelek's household from conceiving because of Abraham's wife, Sarah. Now the Lord was gracious to Sarah as he had said, and the Lord did for Sarah what he had promised. Sarah became pregnant and bore a son to Abraham in his old age, at the very time God had promised him. Amen.

DECLARATION – Bobby Schuller

Well, whoever you are, would you stand with us? We're going to say this creed together as we do every week. 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.

MESSAGE – Bobby Schuller "What to do While Waiting on the Lord"

I want to encourage you today that abandoning outcomes to God is great advice. In life, there are times when we really have to wait on God. Maybe you're watching and you are facing a trial you've never thought you would face.

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Some of us are in jobs we hate and we're looking for another job and we can't find it. Some of us have had a death in the family that was totally unexpected. A divorce in a relationship that you thought was going well. Or a breakup that came out of the blue. Maybe you got turned down from a school that you thought for sure you would get into. Or whatever it is that you're facing, you are wondering, God, how could this be? And now you have to get through something: an addiction, a tough time, and you don't know how long it's going to last. Today's message is for you. I want to encourage you today that in a country like America, and I know we have people watching all around the world, but in a country like ours, work is seen as a morally good thing, and it should be. It is a morally good thing. But because of that, many Americans and westerners view their worth in how productive they are; on how much progress they've made in some way or another. We like to keep report cards and score cards for our life. We like to track that I'm just a little bit more progressed than I am before. So when we have a setback, when we have a season where we can't work, when we have a season where all our work is destroyed by a lawsuit or a bankruptcy or a global pandemic, we start to lose our sense of value and worth, and so we have to go into this place of waiting and when we're there, a lot of times in that waiting we feel embarrassment or shame. We want it to be over quicker. We want that thing so bad. When you are waiting for the Lord, I want to encourage you that when you're waiting for the Lord, work your hardest, but don't trust your hardest. Trust God. When you're working towards that goal, give it a hundred percent, but don't trust your hundred percent, trust the Lord. If you could only see what God is doing in your life right now, it would make things so much simpler, but alas we can't. We have to simply trust Him. We have to actually trust what He said because we can't always see Him, we have to believe that what He said is true, and I do and I hope you do, too. I pray that He'll give you a peace that passes all understanding. When the Bible says, "wait for the Lord," the psalmist in Psalm 37, he's comparing himself to everybody else. He's like look at the wicked. Look at what everybody else does. Everybody who bends the rules, breaks the rules, everybody who cheats and lies, look how well they're doing. And because I follow the rules, and because I do what's good, because I do what is right, because I follow the Lord it feels like they're growing better than I am. But then he says but it's like weeds – they spring up and they fade away, but those who follow the Lord and trust in the Lord, they last forever, right? They endure. And that's what we want in our life today. There is a change that has taken place in society where waiting is different today than it was not that long ago. People today, including me, have either forgotten how to wait, or have never learned in the first place, like my daughter, for example. Man, waiting today is so much easier than it was when I was young. I'll use the example of flying. I was lucky enough as a teenager to do a lot of traveling. A lot of this was because of mission trips and other things, but I had been to every continent, except for Antarctica before I was 18. And because of that, I've been on a lot of long flights. As a young person, especially, full of energy, always going, going, going, flights were very hard for me and I had to brace myself, even for a medium sized flight, say from LA to New York is about six hours, that in my day, its already sounding like an old man. I'm only 40, but you know when I was like 16/17, that was a long six hours of nothing. You might get a newspaper, you might have one or two books and you want to really make sure that book is good, but especially when it's like a long flight, like a twenty-eight-hour flight that we took to South Africa, for example, that's a long time with no I-pad, no laptop, no movies, no little screen on the seat in front of you. If you were lucky, sometimes there was like a little faded projection screen. How many of you remember this? Little screen that come down, and they play some movie, everybody has to watch the same movie at the same time, and then you have to sometimes pay for headphones or sometimes they give it to you for free, but it's like they somehow use air to make sound come through instead of a metal cable. You got to plug it in and hope both sides work and you kind of are like really listening in to some 1970's movie that's not very good. No? Nobody? It doesn't matter.

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Back then for me, I felt that flying was one of those occasions that would happen often in the first half of my life where you just had to wait. You had to be quiet. That you had to be at peace. And I found, even then, that even though I had to brace myself for that, very often I would get a sense of peace from something like flying because I would lean to the knife of boredom, you know what I mean by that? You'd just own it; there's nothing you can do; you're stuck on a plane. And I think today we don't have that, so we've lost, in a way, our ability to really wait. Even listening to a sermon is a bit of a waiting, you know what I mean? You're away from your phone, some of you up there can charge your phones, but.. I can see you if you're on your phone, you know? So you kind of like; it's hard. It's hard to get through something like a speech. So what happens is the spiritual life then is suffocated by that because so much of enduring hardship is a time of waiting for God or something to come through in your life. And so I want to encourage you that although you're going through a hard time, maybe, God is doing great things in your life. He's not looking at you and going oh he's got this, or she's got that, or I remember what she said about her sister, God's not doing that to you right now. God sees you; He loves you, He's for you, and you don't have to make up the difference between the gap of where you are and where you think you should be. God has already filled that gap for you. He loves you just as you are, not as you should be, and He is pouring out grace and favor in your life. Your job is to do your best but to trust God with the rest and to wait patiently. Time, of course, is relative. That's what Einstein said. That's what we learned from him that if an object goes the speed of light, time sort of freezes for it. And he talked a lot about this about how we experience time. There's been a lot of talk about the psychology of time that when you're going through a painful difficult process, time feels like it freezes for you, too, doesn't it. When things are going great and you're making deals, you're making money and relationships are great and you are healthy and everything's great, you're not in that waiting place. Things just seem to go well. Time seems to fly. But when you're stuck in a rut, when you're faced with a challenge, you're absolutely sure you can't get through, when you have a health problem, when you have a sick kid, when you lost your job and you need another job and it doesn't look like anything's on the horizon, when you're in a lawsuit and it's getting appealed and you go through it again and again, that stuff, it feels like forever. My friend, be encouraged. Do your best but don't trust your best. Trust the Lord. God sees you; He loves you. He cares more about the little thing in your life that you think is stupid. He cares more about that than you do, and He loves you. So what do we do then? So this is a question for today. I want to give you some advice. What do we do when we're waiting? What do we do while we're waiting on the Lord? A preamble first before I give you my reflections. Very often in the waiting, God is doing a very special thing in our lives that we only realize after the fact when we look back, this wonderful gift He gave us in that season of waiting. The most important thing in life is not what you do, it's who you become! And that alone is what you take into eternity. Who you become. Even now, you're becoming someone. A year from now, you'll be different than who you are today. And if in this season of waiting your heart is less fixed on the goal of a thing you want to attain and more fixed on who you want to become, I believe that you'll do better when you get there. Okay, enough of that. What do we do when we wait? Number one: when we're waiting for the Lord for breakthrough in our lives and it feels a long way off, we have to remember first that the seeds of today are the trees of tomorrow. We live in an over the counter, give it to me now, microwave society. God's just not that way and God will never agree to step into that kingdom in that way. God is asking you to come into His kingdom, a seed planting, unhurried, everlasting kingdom. One that thinks in terms of decades and centuries and millennia. It's a better place to be, by the way. This is where God's inviting us. So I think of when I tell this story, I think of when God called Noah to build an ark, do you know what the first thing is that Noah did? He planted trees. I mean he lives in the desert, there's not a lot of trees out there.

So Noah not thinking I have to have this ark right away, that he's like okay, if I'm going to build an ark, I got to plant some trees, I have to take care of the trees, I have to grow the trees, and I got to cut them down. So Noah thought 50-80 years ahead, which is how long it took to build the ark. He didn't think – but there's no trees, Lord. What do I do? He's like I know what I can do. I can trust the Lord with the seeds I can put in the ground today. Do not ascribe value to a single day on the harvest you reap. Ascribe the value to that day according to the amount of seeds you planted. What sort of seeds are you planting today that you'll reap tomorrow? Jesus tells a parable about a harvest of wheat. He says that there was a man who planted a field of grain and it was a wonderful crop. And in the middle of the night, his enemy went and he planted a bunch of weeds amongst the harvest and they began to grow along with the wheat. And the servants came back to the master, and they said, lord, did you plant weeds among the wheat? He said, no it was the enemy. They said, well, should we go out there and pull all the weeds up out of the wheat? And he said no, leave it, because if you pull the weeds, you'll pull the harvest, too. Maybe that's you today. You're wheat, you're nourishing, you're full of life, but you see hate-filled people, rude people, people who break the rules growing and thriving around you, but very often God has His own reasons for not pulling them out of the ground. Maybe part of it is that He wants to turn them around using you, too, I don't know. But I think very often its easy when you're growing in your life or you're waiting, to not look and compare your life to your neighbor's life. I heard Prager call this missing tile syndrome. In life, he said he's with a friend at a museum and they were looking at the ceiling. On the ceiling was this beautiful image. And he looked at his friend and he began to describe the colors and the shapes, and he said what do you think about it? And his friend said, well, its nice, but it's missing a tile. Anybody feel that way sometimes? That when you look at your own life and you look at where you've come so far, it's so easy to ruin your life through comparison to the person next to you, or to notice the unfinished symphony in your life. To see that one thing you never got that you wish you'd gotten. Or to see the one thing that's missing. Do not focus on what you have lost. Focus on what you have left. That's what my grandpa used to say, and its good advice. That in life we do lose things, but don't focus on what you've lost. Focus on what you have left and allow God to nourish and nurture that in your life. So number one, when you're waiting, remember every day you are planting seeds that will become your future. If you want to build an ark, you got to plant some trees. Number two: if you're waiting, pray for others out of your own need. This is not in the Bible a ton; it is there, I'm going to talk about that, but this is just as a pastor something that I have observed. So many people have received breakthrough in their lives when instead of obsessively focusing on what they've lost or what they want, they have a total transformed heart in God's kingdom where they're able to pray for someone else to receive the very thing they want because they know how bad it is to be in a place like that. In the story of Abraham and Sarah; one of the things I love about the Bible is how flawed the Bible characters are. You think you're bad? Abraham was pretty messed up, actually. You want to know one of the messed-up things he did? He told people his beautiful wife was his sister so that his life wouldn't be in danger and allowed his wife to be married off to other men. That's crazy. We're just getting started. I could do a whole sermon on this, but I might ruin the Bible for you. This is one of the things, though, I love about the Bible is that the Bible authors didn't clean any of that up. They showed us that broken people can do great, amazing things for God if they just have faith. God doesn't ask us to be perfect today. He asks us to just take a risk and trust that the thing He's calling us to He wouldn't have called us to it if He didn't want us to do it and do it now. So Abraham in the Bible, this is the second time he's done this. He had already done this in Egypt, but they were in a new land in Gerar. And he was afraid that because his wife was gorgeous and she clearly was, that he did this thing again where he called her his sister. And because of that, the king of Gerar took her into his household, the Bible says. Now he never touched her.

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The Bible says he never laid a hand on her or took advantage of her, but the intent is that he's going to marry her. And during this time, the Lord speaks to Abimelek, this king, and says this woman is already married to the prophet. You need to return her now. He returns Sarah to Abraham, and he looks at him and he says what did I ever do to you that you'd try and bring this curse down on my household? Abraham simply tells him, oh, you know, I was trying to protect myself, etc. Anyway, this is the point. It says "then Abraham prayed to God and God healed Abimelek, his wife, and his female slaves so they could have children again. For the Lord had kept all the women in Abimelek's household from conceiving because of Abraham's wife Sarah. Now the Lord was gracious to Sarah, as he had said, and the Lord did for Sarah what he had promised. Sarah became pregnant and bore a son to Abraham in his old age at the very time God had promised to him." Did you catch that? God promised to Abraham that he would have a son, that he would inherit all of Abraham's property and promise, and that out of this son there would be a great nation that would redeem the whole world; that would bring the whole world into God's loving care and kingdom. Twenty-five years Abraham and Sarah are waiting for this pregnancy. And the thing that happens right before they get pregnant is Abraham prays that someone else would get the thing he wants. Abraham prays for Abimelek and his wives to be prolific. And right after that, that's finally when Sarah becomes pregnant. I just have seen this so often, very often the thing that we want, it's like God wants to change something in our heart that when we can pray that someone else get the thing that I want, very often that's when finally, God unlocks our destiny. On a deeper note than that, too, there's also a way in which our loss not only gives us the ability to pray for others with those lost with real spiritual power, but there's also a way that our wounds and loss allow us to minister to people and heal people with those wounds, as well. This is why the church needs to be very careful about trying to find perfect people to lead the ministries. Perfect people do not do a good job at healing broken people. Wounded people are much better at healing wounded people. That's what I think. Henri Nouwen called this the power of the wounded healer. Remember, Jesus is the original wounded healer. When He heals us and lays hands on us to heal us, it's with nail-pierced hands, and those hands were not pierced by an accident, they were pierced by violence and evil and injustice. And it is those hands that were unfairly pierced that bring us the healing in our time of need. It is that broken wounded body that brings us healing in our communion and in our prayer. So in the same way Jesus is the wounded healer to us who have been wounded through scenarios that are unfair, things that have left us broken, in the same way God has called us in our own woundedness to heal others. You might think I got to be perfect before I can help somebody. I have to have it all together before I can be a healer. But very often I've seen that God uses hurting people to help other hurting people. One of the best therapies, for example for people who struggle with addiction, is to be a mentor to somebody else who struggles with alcoholism or drug abuse. And that mentoring is the very thing that allows them to keep their joy up and to follow all of those things, you see? Very often, they say one of the best ways to learn something is to teach it. Well, one of the best ways to receive your healing is to be a wounded healer to someone else, and to pray with faith out of your own wound. It says almost every time before Jesus prays for someone and they receive healing, it says "and he had compassion on them." You know what compassion means? Compassion literally means to suffer with. Passion means to suffer; compassion means that Jesus had this overwhelming sense of sympathy and empathy for the person He was praying for. You can't do that if you've had a perfect life. You can't do that if you've never been hungry, you've never suffered, if you've never been able to pay a bill, if you've never been taken advantage of, if you've never been abused or broken up with or divorced or betrayed or sued, you will not have the ability to pray with the same power of people who have been unfairly wounded. I'm trying to give you hope here because friend, I know every single person in this room has been wounded. Every single person watching on TV has been hurt by someone unfairly.

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And we think that that thing is a source of sometimes shame for some of us if it was really bad. We always think well I played a part in that. Stop it. God is going to use your wound to heal others. God loves you just as you are, not as you should be, and even now He's going to use your life to pour out joy and encouragement to others who are going through tough times. So remember, be a wounded healer. When we're waiting, pray out of your own need for people that need the same thing you do. Heal people even though yourself are looking for a healing. Encourage those, even when you're struggling, and you'll find that God will bring it to you in that same way. So when we're waiting, number one: seeds today are trees tomorrow. Number two: pray for others out of your need. And number three, maybe the most important one: when you get tired in this season of waiting or enduring, when you get tired, learn to rest, not quit. Learn to rest and not quit. So often as believers we try and live from a place of God's grace in our spiritual lives, what we call our spiritual lives is this thing that's over here, but in business we do it in our own strength. Or when we're practicing law, we do it in our own strength. Or when we're parenting, we do it in our own strength. We do ministry, I do it in God's strength. But when I am driving, I do it in my own strength. When I go to work, I do it in my own strength. You see, God wants us to bring our whole lives under His kingdom, that everything we do from dating to paying bills to reconciling with our neighbor who screamed at us last week, or something. That all of that stuff we do it under God's strength, and from a place of His grace. Grace is not mercy. I think that a lot of people think of grace as forgiveness. So let me say this to you. I'm going to say a sentence to you, okay? And as a Christian, if you've gone to church your whole life, if this puts up red flags for you, then you have to regain a better sense of grace. Jesus needed grace from the Father. Jesus needed grace from the Father more than the disciples needed grace from the Father, and the disciples needed grace more than sinners needed grace, did you know that? Because grace is not mercy. We experience grace as mercy when we're broken and flawed, and we repent.. I'm sorry that I flipped off the guy on the freeway, or whatever. I'm sorry I screamed at my teacher. I'm sorry I lied to my spouse or whatever it is. And we bring that.. I'm so sorry, and we experience grace as mercy in that moment, but grace doesn't mean mercy, it means favor! Favor! And it's a kind of favor with thickness to it. Its tangible. It's like sauce. It's like fuel for a jet. Grace is the thing that gives a woman of God, a man of God the power to be like God, and to do what Christ called us to do. Grace is the fountain we drink from. It's just being in God's presence. I feel like this image really says it best. This artist did such a good job. It says Jesus in Luke 5:15 and 16, it said that Jesus would go to the lonely places and pray to be with the Father. See, this is Jesus just being with God and just living under His care and life; soaking up the power of the heavens so that every day He can walk in the easy rhythms of the Father's grace. This is a vision for discipleship. Not always trying harder, not always keeping one step ahead of the other, but learning that when I get tired in the race, that doesn't mean quit, give up, it means rest, and rest joyfully. Rest isn't something I have to be embarrassed about. Rest isn't something that I should think that I'm bad at the thing I'm doing. Rest is something I need. Stop feeling guilty for taking care of your soul! It's okay to have some "me" time. In fact, God commands it. What do you think the Sabbath is? It's one of the ten commandments. Take a day off, one day off! He even says there, I, God needed a day off. On the seventh day I rested. So you need to rest. You got to rest. You got to take in the grace of God. You got to breathe in the life of God. The Bible says "not by might, not by power, but by my" who knows? "Spirit." You know the word for spirit both in the New Testament and the Old Testament is the same word for breathing or for breath. Spirit means breath. In Hebrew its ruach, it's the breath that God breathed into the nostrils of Adam when He brought him to life. Its life and its breath. And like breathing, life should be the same way as breathing. Sometimes you exhale, you do your work, but sometimes you got to inhale, too. You have to take a deep gulp of the spirit so that you're not doing life in your own power. And I know I've said this a million times, the greatest barrier for most people living in God's power is shame. God doesn't want anything to do with me.

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Oh, you've been a Christian for years, God knows this thing about me in my heart, or this thing I did, or this thing that was done to me. Let it go. Man. See even there we're trying to handle our own sin, mistakes, flaws, wounds in our own strength. We're saying God's upset at me because I couldn't handle my own sin on my own. God never asked you to handle your sin on your own. You see? Broken, messed up, struggling, whatever it is, just breathe Him in. See that's the irony! Until we stop trying to control our moral lives and get everything perfectly, until we just understand that God is for us and not against us, and then our moral lives become a response to that, only then are we truly walking as the disciples did in their power and grace. Brennan Manning said after years and years, the end of his life, he said after years and years of meditation and preaching, he said I believe that God will only ask us one question when we get to the throne: did you believe I loved you? Did you believe it? Did you build your life as a response to that loving call? Did you really trust that I loved you and that I cared for you, or, did you say no, God doesn't really love me. I got to fix my life on my own. I got to do it by myself. I got to get it right. I got to get my life to like a B-minus and then I could be under God's loving care. Right? I got to tune up the car just enough so it drives so that God can get in the driver's seat. I'm not going to let Him do the fixing. I want to encourage you, my friend, in this season of waiting, don't come before God ashamed. Just trust that He loves you just right where you are, and that He will get you through this tough time. He's working on your behalf. And then begin to slowly respond and build the life that you want in His kingdom that's like Jesus, but trust Him first in that in-between space, will you? And you'll see that as you begin to live life through His grace and power and fresh wind and holy spirit, that all that other stuff you're worried about becomes a lot easier, and you'll have a lot more joy and power in everything you do. Lord Jesus, we do, we trust it to you. Stand with us, Lord! Just as we are. We thank you that as a loving mother or father loves their child, we thank you that you love us, even when we've messed up or we're not like the other Christians, or whatever it is. We just thank you that you love us, God. And again, Father, I pray for an outpouring of your Holy Spirit, and I ask, God, that you would lift us up in our troubled times. We thank you that you're working on our behalf and that even though we do our best, we can trust you with everything else. It's in Jesus' name we pray, amen.