

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 Schuller & Hannah Schuller

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

HS: And hello church family, and a special welcome to our first time visitors. We are so happy to have you with us. And today, I felt I was supposed to tell you that you have never been a mistake. God has incredible purposes for your life, and no one else can be you. Thank you so much for being here today. We love you.

BS: Let's begin with a word of prayer: Father, we thank you so much that you have gathered us here as a hen gathers her chicks. We thank you, Lord, that we're coming under your wing, Lord, to be supportive and loved by you, and we thank you, God, that you look at us longingly and lovingly and we receive, God, all the grace and mercy that you dish out to us, and we're thankful for it. And I pray, Father, that all of us would leave here full of joy, full of life, and we thank you, God, for your good word. It's in Christ' name we pray, amen.

HS: Amen! Turn around and shake the hand of the person next to you and say God loves you and so do I.

INTERVIEW – Morgan Harper Nichols (MHN) with Bobby Schuller (BS)

Morgan Harper Nichols is an artist and poet who creates beautiful and inspirational imagery from the stories she receives from others. Her new book "All Along You were Blooming" includes a collection of her poetry to remind us that there is grace every day.

BS: Morgan, hi! Thank you..

MHN: Hello!

BS: ..so much for being here.

MHN: Oh, well thank you for having me.

BS: Well you have a huge following and we're just so thrilled that you're here. I'm sure if there's any artists or poets in the house, they're probably so excited to see you in the house, and I'm excited, too.

MHN: Well I'm honored to be here. This is really exciting. Thank you.

BS: Well for those of you who are not familiar with your work, you are an artist, a poet, but you started creating pieces based off of people's stories. And so tell me a little bit about how you got into art and how this all sort of happened.

MHN: Yes, so I grew up just outside of Atlanta, Georgia. I was a home schooled preacher's kid, and I loved the space I was growing up, and at the same time, I felt a lot more introverted than a lot of other people I was around, and I really struggled with like how do you do ministry, how can you like serve others if you don't feel like you have the big personality and you don't feel like you can do it. And for me, I just asked God a lot of those questions in my journal and in my art when I would get home at night.

And I did that for many, many years, and into my 20's, I just turned 30, and into my 20's, I started getting opportunities to do creative things, and I was running into that same thing of like I just don't feel like my personality is big enough. I feel like it's what I'm called to do, but at the same time, I'm like I don't feel like I have the tools to do it. And it was a really strange place to be.

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So I just started writing about that strange place of like what am I supposed to do and how does it work, and as I started sharing it, I realized that's a part of a lot of other people's stories, as well. Way more people than I realized also deal with those questions all the time of where they fit, how they fit.

So yes, I put those questions and those prayers into artwork.

BS: It's interesting to think about.. I mean you're an introvert, obviously. You recharge with me time; you're getting alone, and it is interesting how very often the church that can feel a bit like a theater sometimes when we gather, we forget that this is just a small part of what it means to be the church all week long, all year long. And it's so interesting, I think you really probably gave voice to a lot of kids and teens who probably felt like maybe because they weren't like a spaz. I think it's great. It seemed to really resonate with people.

MHN: Absolutely. And I've just been really grateful because as I started to share what felt so like.. I was like I don't know, maybe other people don't deal with this, I don't know. I'm just going to share it. As I started to share these things, I started to get a lot of messages, and a lot of them were from young people, and they were like I'm 16 and here's what I'm going through, and this is what this art is saying to me and where I'm at. And I got to this place where I was like you know what, even though I still deal with self doubt, even though I still have insecurity in sharing, I was like I can at least write for her. I was like if nothing else, I can make something for her. And honestly, I looked up three years later and I created this whole body of work person by person, so literally everything I make, people send me messages and my artwork is a letter to them.

BS: And it's really a poem over a painting, really, right? And people have just fallen in love with your work. I mean you said when you started, I think you were at a few thousand people on Instagram and now you're well over a million, is that right?

MHN: Yes, yes. And I just looked up one day; I don't use like all the hash tags and stuff that you're supposed to do, like that wasn't my goal. I wasn't trying to do that.

BS: Yes, you didn't work the system.

MHN: I was just.. yeah, I did it..

BS: And people just actually liked your art!

MHN: Yes, and it's just so fascinating, it was like some of the things that we feel so alone in, and we're like I think I'm the only person in my family, or the only person who deals with this. Like there are so many people who feel that same thing.

BS: Totally, yes.

MHN: So I kind of stay in that space a lot, and I just want people to know that they are loved and they are not alone.

BS: Well one of the things I really love is that you finally put this all together in a book so you have this work, it's a gorgeous book. You guys did a great job with your art and the poetry over it. And what a great thing. The idea is for boundless living. Tell us a little bit about that. The book is called All Along You Were Blooming.

MHN: Yes, I love the word boundless and I write a lot about endless, boundless grace because I think the concept of like I am not enough, that's something that I deal with and a lot of other people deal with, as well, especially lots of young people have just like I'm not enough of this, or I'm not enough of that. And this idea that like God has given us this grace that goes so far; it is more than enough. I'm like that's what I have to remind myself of every hour, like every day it's like when I don't feel I have enough, like Christ, like that grace is sufficient for me.

BS: Is that what you hope people get when they read this book is that sense of being enough?

MHN: Yes! Absolutely, and to know that you don't have to do it alone, and if you have hard days or other people out there who are willing to walk with you, so yes, that's my hope.

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BS: The book is called All Along You Were Blooming: Thoughts for boundless living. Morgan Harper Nichols, we're just so honored that you came to our church and we really want to encourage you to get this book. It's a wonderful, beautiful work of art. And I know you'll enjoy it as much as I have.

MHN: Oh, well thank you. It's an honor to be here.

BS: Thanks Morgan, God bless you.

MHN: Thank you so much. God bless you, as well.

BS: Appreciate you.

MHN: Thank you, all.

SCRIPTURE – Proverb 9,9-11 – Hannah Schuller

In preparation for the message, Proverbs 9: Instruct the wise and they will be wiser still; teach the righteous and they will add to their learning. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding. For through wisdom your days will be many, and years will be added to your life. Amen.

WELCOME – Bobby Schuller

Welcome! We're so glad you're watching! If you live in Orange County or Los Angeles, or heck Riverside or even San Diego, you know what? We're going to even accept Las Vegas. Come on down to our church, and if you're ever visiting, please come to Irvine and visit with us. We'd love to see you and give you a big hug and a high five and a handshake, and anything else that is like that. Okay.

DECLARATION – Bobby Schuller

Would you hold your hands out like this as a sign 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 "The Gathering Hen"

I want to ask your forgiveness in advance for how my brain will probably not work very well today. I woke up at 3:30 this morning. My son came into our room because he wanted to go to Disneyland and refused to go back to bed. And then my daughter woke up because she started freaking out because she was wondering if the ribbing on the roof behind your teeth, the roof of your mouth, if that means more teeth are coming in, and she started worrying about that. And so all of a sudden our bedroom this morning was absolute chaos, so I just got up and came to church. So I'm really worried I'm going to say something uber inappropriate that I can't un-say. Like all the filters are gone, very few of the synapses are actually connecting in the way they're supposed to. So it's either going to be very boring or very entertaining. We'll just trust the Lord, amen? Let's dive right in. Okay. Today! I want to talk about how as a disciple of Jesus Christ, that your life is an ever developing, hopefully ever improving project that you are responsible for. And one of the ways that we're supposed to view our life is like my life is a set of skills, values, things I do, habits that develop over time that help me accomplish my goals and all of these things, and that over time I'm supposed to develop into a more Jesus kind of person. In other words, view your life as a project that you're working on that's always getting better. When we do this, if we're doing this, we ought to invite the feedback and insight of others. We all know that. It's a smart thing to do, it's wise to receive feedback or criticism or things like this. But most of us honestly we don't do that very well. We don't want to do it, we're not good at it, we're not interested. It reminds me of like.. very many of us, we have this view where like we're probably doing either a lot worse or a lot better than we are, rather than just what we're doing.

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I remember when Hannah and I first started dating. It's funny - George Carlin who is that old standup comedian, he said "most women are crazy, most men are stupid, and the reason women are crazy is because the men are stupid." Now that was true in my life when Hannah and I first started dating. For me as a young man, just in and out of college, I really struggled to bond emotionally with others. I had lots of friends. I could go to a party and have fun and was doing things a lot, but I really struggled with what it meant to connect deeply and emotionally with someone through vulnerability, honesty and intimacy. And so when Hannah, really was my first very serious girlfriend that I might marry, when things started becoming more serious, this, I think was an issue that I didn't see clearly. And one of the things I love, I haven't told this story in awhile so hopefully it'll land well, but I always think of this as probably a difficult thing for Hannah to do, maybe a little bit embarrassing. She put together a list of things that boyfriends do to show their girlfriends that they treasure them. Something like that. And she made it like very plain as day, foolproof. I think a lot of this is because Hannah grew up with five brothers so she kind of knows that men are stupid. So she put this list together and it was stuff like boyfriends ask their girlfriends how their day went, and how they're feeling. They hold their hands, they open doors for them, they etc., etc. And she did it in such a gracious sweet way. And I'm really glad to say that I received that and looked through it, and although I was a little embarrassed, I was like okay, I'm going to start doing these things. And now we're married! But I will say that was probably an important part of understanding something about myself that I had never seen before, and that was that I had a lot of emotional walls up towards people that loved me. It helped me; I could have taken it another way. I could have said well you don't do this, or you're not that, or I'm doing a good job. And this is what most of us do, right? Most of us either when somebody comes to us with feedback about how we can do better, one they don't to it as well as someone like Hannah usually does, very like nice about it, and like let's sit down and let's just talk about this. Most people it's a little more emotional. But aside from that, when we get feedback, when we hear from someone, usually we either internalize it as shame, like I feel really embarrassed and I just disappear and I shut the person out, right? Or we react defensively. We say things about them that they're not doing well. Like, well you're blind to this, or you don't show me you love me. And this is how, especially spouses, boyfriends and girlfriends, this happens with coworkers and colleagues, employees, employers. This works with kids, friends, colleagues, right? Whenever someone trusts you, likes you, loves you enough to give you some feedback, most of us are not happy about getting feedback, right? Most of us don't want to hear it, and that's really what it is. We just don't want to hear it. And yet this is one of the best ways we can grow as a disciple. And now I need to just pause for some irony. I have been preaching now for twenty years, and it's amazing how very often when you preach, people are always thinking about someone else that does this. My son needs to hear this sermon. My husband needs to hear this sermon. It reminds me of like.. did you guys ever see the movie The People vs. O.J. Simpson? Very good film. Or actually I think it's a TV series. And very, very well done. Two of the characters are Nathan Lane and what's the guy from.. the scientologist.. the one that's not Tom Cruise. Thank you, John Travolta. That was the way I described him. Yes, John Travolta, who's playing Robert Shapiro, and Nathan Lane, who's playing F. Lee Bailey. F. Lee Bailey comes in and Robert Shapiro looks at him and says "hello Judas." And F. Lee Bailey looks at him and says, "I suppose that makes you Jesus?" And I thought it was like such a great response. And this is how we are, right! Like you're Judas because we're not thinking that what we're saying, like I'm Jesus, but very often we have these things. So we always want to think someone else does not receive criticism, and today I want to encourage you to think about your own life and ways in which you can invite feedback, even criticism, or take criticism without shame, and without defensiveness. Ideally we're not going to have either of those things. That if we get criticism, we can sort of just receive it objectively as what it is.

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And not curse it and not bless it – just receive it as it is, and analyze it, and then either take it and learn from it, or discard it. But to never be like oh, this is me, I'm such a bad person. Or to go, no, you do this. And if we can learn to do that, I think that will give us so much more wisdom, such a better life, and help us develop better as people, amen? Oh, I forgot, we're still on the series of birds and today's the last one, and we probably can't forget one of the most famous bird stories, and that is the story of the hen. Its, I think, only used once, but it's so peculiar. That is a giant chicken. Wow. Whoa. We can't forget the story. It's a great image of a mother hen caring for her chicks, looking over them, guarding them, protecting them. And this is the image that Jesus uses to describe Himself when He speaks of the Jewish people. That He would have guarded them, protected them, called them to Himself. And it was actually a line that people in His day would have recognized. If you have your Bible's, let's open up to Matthew chapter 23. Now it's interesting because we're a very positive church and that's a good thing to be. And so we tend to pick very positive passages, but today I picked one of those like very, very dark passages to preach on. It was so dark, in fact, that Hannah was like I can't read this as the scripture reading. I need something else. I can't be like the blood of prophets is coming against you and all this stuff, so I was like okay. Yes, she couldn't interpret it. Yes, without context, it would be ridiculous. You all would be like what is she talking about. So anyway, so we did the Proverbs passage, which I'm also preaching on today. But even still, Diane who I texted it to, she was like this is really dark. And then I got another text from Pastor Tim who was like hey bud, are you sure you sent the right text? This is really, really dark. Are you sure this is the one? But I love this stuff, you know me, especially when I can get a little bit of history in there. Okay, Matthew chapter 23. This is the passage where Jesus refers to Himself as a hen. In the context of this passage, Jesus has been in Jerusalem, He's been preaching and engaging with people for like four chapters, and He's just gotten into like pretty much the heavy part, very heavy, very dark part of this sermon that effectively He's giving. And He's just finished the seven woes against the Pharisees, the teachers of the law. Now when we think of Pharisees, we think of these bad guys, but when you picture Pharisees, picture they're usually good men, a lot of them, and some of them are bad men. They're a big mix of people, but picture pastors! He is saying this to people like me, like Bobby Schuller. People who tell everybody how to live, tell everybody what to do well, but don't practice it themselves. He's talking to leaders. And He talks about how these teachers, in particular, laud and venerate the graves of holy men and women; how they put offerings and flowers on their graves, and how they said oh if you would have been sent to us how we would have followed you. But then He says but the prophets and the men and the women of God that I send to you, you kill them and you hurt them and you cast them away. And then He says this: "therefore I am sending you prophets and sages and teachers. Some of them you will kill and crucify. Others you will flog in your synagogues and pursue from town to town. And so upon you will come all the righteous blood that has been shed on earth. From the blood of the righteous Abel to the blood of Zachariah, son of Versai whom you murdered between the temple and the altar. Truly I tell you, all this will come on this generation." Do you know what He's saying there, by the way? So in our Bible, in our Old Testament, the first book is Genesis, but the last book in the Christian version of the Old Testament is Malachi. The Catholics did this well after the forming of the Biblical canon, but the original canon for the Hebrews actually does not end with Malachi, it ends with 2nd Chronicles. And what happens at the very end of 2nd Chronicles is the murder of Zachariah the prophet. It says that God is sending all of these prophets to Joash, this king who has turned his back on God to save the people, to save them. And He keeps sending people, and then finally Zachariah is sent to Him, and Zachariah is killed in the temple! The irony: the very place that has been neglected. This is the last murder of a godly man in the Jewish Bible. What's the first? Of the story of Abel, right? Cain and Abel. Cain and Abel are brothers, the sons of Adam and Eve, and Cain because he's jealous of Abel, kills his brother and God shows up and says "where's your

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brother?" And Cain says, "Am I my brother's keeper?" what? And then God looks at him and says, "Listen. The blood of your brother Abel cries out to me." What's Jesus saying? All these prophets, all of these holy people that were sent to you, you killed them all and you're still doing it today. And of course He's foretelling His own crucifixion. But He's telling them look, you're still doing this. You're still sending away those that I'm sending to bless you. And then He says "Jerusalem, Jerusalem." Let me just pause for a minute. It's interesting when you think about Jesus because you see His birth, and then like His whole young adult life is almost completely invisible. And then He emerges as this great sage and rabbi. And I'm always so curious about what Jesus' life would have been like from, I don't know, like four to 25 or something. We do know some things, though, that we can fill in the blanks. One is that what did Jesus do for a living? Somebody answer. He was a what? Carpenter? Wrong. Wrong! Not a carpenter, sorry friends. He was a tekton. You know exactly what that is, right? A tekton. Tekton means builder. Builder. So if you're British and builders use wood, you translate tekton as carpenter. But if you're in Israel, where there aren't hardly any trees or timber, and everything is built with stone, a builder or a tekton is a mason. Jesus was a stone mason. Not the one like in the club. He worked with stones. And because He lived in the Roman Empire, He and His father Joseph; it's interesting to picture Jesus as uncreated God, the essence of God in the flesh, but still like being a teenager, and out there working. And it's interesting when you picture Jesus building houses and markets, and delivering bread to His aunt, and doing mosaics in synagogues, and people stealing His tools, and people bugging Him or teasing Him or bullying Him, and how even as a teenager and a child, He dealt with all of those things in the development of His life. Well one of those buildings as a tekton, so probably a little bit of carpentry, but mostly stone masonry, one of those buildings that He would have worked on all the time would have been a theater. Every town had one. They were elaborate and beautiful. They were centers of gathering and music and play. And they functioned as a philosophical heart for Roman and Greek people. Aristotle said that the theater experience, that the theater should be always sad and dark because we should gather around these sad stories for a word he called catharsis. That when we experience the sadness of another that we know intellectually is fiction that allows us to take our real story, our nonfiction story and sort of hold it out in a safe way, and re-experience it in a way in which we can let it go. I think there really is something valuable to that. So the Greeks loved the tragedy. They loved these very sad, very dark stories. And I imagine that Jesus was called several times as a master stone mason to go and repair a stage, or a seat, or maybe He even built an amphitheater somewhere, or some other great building. And maybe He got free tickets and maybe He got to see a lot of these shows, or was just working on them all the time. But one of the most famous.. this is what I'm getting at. One of the most famous plays in Jesus' day was a tragedy called Trojan Women by Euripides. And it's about the destruction of the city of Troy, which is supposed to be this golden, great city; the hope on a hill. And it was like a magical, amazing place that gets destroyed. And the play actually begins after the siege is done, and after it's been overrun. And the queen wakes up in the tent of the enemy general, Agamemnon, and her opening line sounds something like this: O Troy, Troy, Ilium, Ilium, how I would have gathered you as a hen gathers her chicks. Okay, let's go to the passage. "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were not willing." Interesting, isn't it? Jesus is quoting.. most Bible scholars believe Jesus is quoting the Trojan Women play by Euripides, which is a sad play. In other words, Jesus is not saying this in anger, He's saying it in grief. He's sad that Jerusalem will not embrace the teachings of the Prince of Peace; that they won't save themselves through the wisdom that He is offering, I mean He's like the queen weeping over Troy, right? He is a prophet that is not angry anymore at this point.

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It's more like He's just so sad because He also knows what's going to happen and what's going to happen is that Jerusalem will be destroyed by the Romans because they couldn't live at peace. And should they have? Were the Romans good guys? No, the Romans were evil, they were occupiers, but Jesus gives us a method for that, of how to deal with people who are evil to us; how to deal with people who treat us badly. And they just wouldn't have it. They wouldn't listen to Him, and I think that's at the heart of what Jesus is saying here. It's a fun thing to ask, though, isn't it? What if? What if the Jewish people, all of them, not just a handful of them, had decided no, we're going to live out the Torah in this way that this great rabbi is teaching us: love our enemies, and be at peace with our neighbor, right? Turn the other cheek and this kind of thing that actually embodied the early church. What if they had embraced us and Jerusalem hadn't been destroyed, and there would have been a temple. These are the games that I like to play when I look at history. But not you guys, I can tell, it's not your thing. It's cool. It's all good. Eventually what happens in 66 A.D. is there's a tax revolt. Israel is already a bubbling sort of hot mess of emotions where people don't want the Romans there, and there's this tax revolt that happens, and this guy Gessius Florus plunders the temple to take the money back to Rome for the taxes, and this creates this giant eternal war between Israel and Rome. And finally a general named Titus who will later become Caesar, sieges the city. It takes four months to take the city down. It takes a long time to destroy it, but he utterly destroys the whole city, enslaves the people, and this is when the diaspora happens in 87 D. People are sent all over Europe and Asia Minor, and synagogues are started and this is when the Jewish people are scattered. There is incidentally the arch of Titus, which is near the forum in Rome. You can actually see dark imagery of women and children and loot being taken away from the temple. And I can just feel like Jesus sees this picture in His head of this horrible thing that's going to happen to His people, a Jewish rabbi. He sees it. He knows this is going to happen to His people and it grieves His heart. Well anyway, all of this to say that this is human nature. This is not like a Jewish thing. This is a people thing. Very often when we finally feel like we've got it together, when we finally feel like we're surviving and our spouse comes along, or our kid comes along, or our best friend or colleague comes along and gives us some uncomfortable feedback, well quite frankly we don't want to hear it! I'm not into it right now. Things are fine! Leave me alone. Right? This is kind of how we feel. And that is one of the biggest.. that's what everybody does, by the way. Join the club, right? Men, women, everybody does it. But there are a handful of people that the Bible says are wise and these are the people who invite that kind of feedback from their spouse or their kid, even though it's super annoying, and what kind of pedestal are they on? Proverbs chapter 9 says, "Whoever corrects a mocker invites insults. Whoever rebukes the wicked incurs abuse. Do not rebuke mockers or they will hate you. Rebuke the wise and they will love you. Instruct the wise and they will be wiser still. Teach the righteous and they will add to their learning." Proverbs chapter 12 says, "Whoever loves discipline loves" what? Knowledge. "But whoever hates correction is" what? Stupid. Stupid. It's because it's human nature. So I just want to talk.. just a few principles that I think have really helped me and can really help you as a leader, as a spouse, as a friend, as a kid, as a colleague, as a coworker. First I want to say this: the more you ask for feedback and criticism as a leader, whatever, the more you ask for feedback and criticism, the more people will trust and respect you, and the less resentment they will feel towards you. Can I tell you that the more somebody loves you, the more they probably feel a little resentment towards you most of the time. Is that believable? There's always this little bit of resentment that can pop up every once in awhile, and it's usually because there's some aspect of your life that you're purposely turning a blind eye to. I'll say it again: the more you ask for feedback and criticism, the more people are going to trust and respect you, and the less resentment they will feel towards you. That's a promise. So think of your life, then, as a disciple of Jesus, as an ever improving project.

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Look at your life: your skills, your traits, your values, the way you pray, the way you talk, think of marriage as a skill, think of parenting and grand parenting. Think of these things as a skill. Being a friend is a skill. Being a leader is a skill. And I just want to say that when we think of our life as an ever improving project, that no matter how old or young we are, we don't ever think that we've arrived. That we make a point that I can always be a better version of me, and that God sees that person, and is excited about the idea of me becoming more like that. And I think that's who you're becoming and who you can become. Help yourself as you would help a friend. If you were to give yourself advice, if you were your own best friend, what advice would you give yourself? How would your life change if you came to you for some personal advice? All right. That's probably good. The number one rule of speaking is don't insult your audience and I just, again, just remember I woke up at 3:30. I really do want to say that this is such an important part of a joyful life is viewing yourself as a disciple. Actually we have a small graph; I'll just show this real quick. I was going to skip it. That discipleship is at the heart of who I am and that then creates my values, like what's important to me, and those values then in turn become skills and traits, and then those skills and those traits become my goals and my projects. If all I have are skills and traits, and goals and projects, but I don't have discipleship and values, then anytime someone gets in the way of my goals and projects, they're bad because I don't have the values that are driving those things. When I go for my skills and my traits but my values are out of whack, it's easy for me to forget about my kids and grandkids, forget about my spouse, forget about my church or my friends, or about the things that are important. And so it needs to be discipleship that informs our values, and our values that show us the kind of skills, traits and then goals and projects, and then when we succeed, we're doing it in the right way, and we're doing it with other people. And then we really feel like we're getting somewhere in life. Does that make sense? Lord, we thank you so much that you love us. And thank you, God, that when you're correcting us, or when people are correcting us, that a lot of times it's in love and people just aren't always good at saying it in the most gentle way. And so I pray, God, that you'd give us wisdom, and learn, Father, how to receive from your Holy Spirit, and receive from our neighbor in a way that really helps us. I don't want any person here to feel shame, or to feel anger or defensiveness, but to just take these experiences at their face value. Lord, we love you and we thank you, it's in Jesus' name we pray, amen.