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### GOOD MORNING – Bobby & Hannah

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

HS: Hello visitors and church family. We are always happy that you're here. You know callings are not just for pastors. You have a calling from God. Every Christian has a ministry. You are trusted and you are loved.

BS: You know that thing I say every morning – this is the day, that actually comes from Psalms, and it actually begins with the stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone. This is marvelous in our eyes for this is the day the Lord has made. We will rejoice and be glad in it. Today we're talking about how the stone was rejected and how very often when we experience rejection in life, it's a gift. Hopefully that encourages you today. We want you to leave here full of joy and life, ready for the coming week. Let's begin with a word of prayer. Father, we thank you so much for gathering us in this place. I thank you for everyone under the sound of my voice, whether on television, or here in the building, we thank you, God, that you love us, and that you've not rejected us, but saved us, and called us your own. Thank you, God, that we're the apple of your eye. We love you, it's in Jesus' name we pray, amen.

HS: Amen.

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

### SCRIPTURE – Psalm 118:22-29 - Hannah

In preparation for the message, Psalm 118:22. The stone the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone; this is the Lord's doing. It is marvelous in our eyes. This is the day the Lord has made. Let us rejoice and be glad in it. Save us, we beseech you, oh Lord. Oh Lord, we beseech you. Give us success. Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord. We bless you from the house of the Lord. The Lord is God, and He has given us light. Bind the festal procession with branches up to the horns of the altar. You are my God, and I will give thanks to you. You are my God, and I will extol you. Oh, give thanks to the Lord for he is good; for his steadfast love endures forever.

### INTERVIEW – KRISTOFFER POLAHA

Kristoffer Polaha is an actor, co-author, and father of three, who has starred in a number of Hallmark films, as well as Wonder Woman 1984 and the upcoming Jurassic World: Dominion. Working in Hollywood has given him a mission field to not only share his faith, but be involved in faith-based productions, including the film Where Hope Grows, which is now streaming on PureFlix. The film is about an unexpected friendship that helps one man put his life back on track.

INTERVIEW – KRISTOFFER POLAHA – Bobby

BS: Kristoffer, hi. Welcome. We're so glad you're with us.

KP: Bobby. Thank you. What a blessing for me to be there with you guys today.

BS: It's our joy. For those who may not know your story, maybe tell us a little bit about your faith journey.

KP: Sure. I grew up in a Christian household, so I knew the Lord from a very, very early age. When I was a little boy, I spent a ton of time in prayer and used to just talk to the Holy Spirit. And then very quickly, I'll let your friends know that when I was 17, I had this sort of prayer of pride, and your topic is rejection today, and I, in a sense rejected my relationship with God out of pride. I just wanted to know if the good things that were happening in my life were His doing, or they were mine. I sort of wandered for six years spiritually, always considered myself a Christian in that time, but didn't really act like it, wasn't really in relationship. And then God just.. He reached out and He wanted me back and He grabbed a hold of my heart, and I have been deep in relationship with Jesus ever since. That was in college right there at the tail end.

## The Rejection was a gift

My wife, who's an amazing Christian, and her father was an amazing pastor of the Lord, southern Baptist from Alabama, just really sort of have been walking alongside of me for the past 20 years, and yes, using Hollywood as a mission field and taking every opportunity I can to really shine Christ's light.

BS: It's an interesting question. You hear this story a lot. I don't know enough about the Amish to comment on it, but my understanding is that very often like Amish kids will be encouraged to actually do what you did to sort of spread their wings for a little bit. I don't know the details but..

KP: It's called a Rumspringa, I think.

BS: Oh, so you know! Okay.

KP: It's a Rumspringa, yes, they go off and they see if they want to really do this or not.

BS: Yes, did you feel like your brief time that's.. oh not super brief, six years of sort of.. do you feel like that was a good thing for you, or what do you think?

KP: You know, it's funny, Bobby, my wife, like I said, her name is Julianne, and her life has always been touched so tightly to Jesus, and she never wavered, and she always says she's never smoked cigarettes, she's doesn't really drink anything, she's a great girl. Waited for marriage, the whole thing. Purity. And we have three boys. And her story is far more interesting and far more compelling than all the stuff that I can't talk about, where I'm like ahhhhh, I mean you don't want to.. you know. It's like what was interesting is I did this thing called semester at sea in college, and I ran around the world, and wanted to study world theater, as I'm an actor, and I wanted to study world religion. I went to all these temples, and I went to all these different places, houses of worship around the world, and really wanted to do a deep dive in what other people were believing in. It's funny because my roommate was this guy named Ryan Johnson of Atlanta and he was a born again Christian. He was like brother, have you ever really dived into the Bible? Have you ever really read God's word? And it was the first time that, of course I grew up in a household, I grew up in a Christian home and I'd gone to church literally every Sunday of my life, and like I said, I was praying, and I was in relationship for a long, long time. But doing that deep dive and looking at the comparison of our God, through Christ, and all of these other houses of worship, like I started to realize. So for me, that was good because I can stand in confidence and I can talk about my faith in a very intelligent way, and I can compare it to other world religions and I can say well I understand that this is what happens in the Quran, I can understand Hinduism or Buddhism or Shintoism what goes on. But what Jesus is talking about is totally radically different. And it gives me a little bit of authority. In that sense, it was good. But I feel like I lost six years of wisdom and growth and maturity in Christ when I kind of stepped away. So if you're young, I don't recommend Rumspringa. Stick with it, even though you might have your own questions, you can still figure it out while walking in relationship with God.

BS: Now I heard you're going to be in the coming movie Jurassic World Dominion. And I heard you had a near death experience. Is that true?

KP: I did. They're only related in the sense that my roommate from college is the guy who's directing Jurassic World Dominion. And so he and I went to NYU together way, way back, graduated in '99, and he called me up, but he was a part of my life at this moment, right before I went on semester at sea, which is where I met Colin, I was walking in New York City, and this was at the end of my.. like I said my wilderness period, and I was with a friend of mine Katherine Smith.

And we walking around New York City, and there was a ten thousand things that we could have done that would have put us in a different situation or at a different place, in a different time that night. But where we were happened to be in front of this store, and in the basement this man was trying to burn his restaurant down for insurance purposes. And Katherine was.. I was between her and the traffic, and I felt a prompting of the Holy Spirit, and I moved, and I switched sides with her, and I said I don't know why, but I feel better on this side of you. About a block later, the building exploded, and we were caught in this blast. It was 120 stitches for me and because I had moved, I was wearing this thick sheep sheer leather jacket with cords and boots, and I'd basically eclipsed all the glass that probably more than likely would have killed Katherine. And even when we were in the emergency room, the ER doctor said, or actually the fire marshal came in to interview us and said you should have been decapitated because they were frisbee sized pieces of glass that were quarter inch thick and store front window glass. And that was actually the moment where I felt God's hand in my life. There were so many super natural moments in that near death experience, and then the week after, Bobby, I don't know if you've ever gone to sleep and right before you like drift off to sleep, God just gives you an epiphany and you see a truth or you understand something sort of greater than your scope of knowledge would allow you to comprehend.

## The Rejection was a gift

I was living in that sort of epiphany feeling for about a week, and I would see people, and if they had joy, I would just start laughing, and if they were carrying a lot of sorrow, I would start crying. And I knew that God had spared me.. like suddenly I was not supposed to be alive, and I was, and that night I went to sleep.. it was a whole night thing.. surgery.. all the stitches and everything that took place. That next night when I went to sleep, I remember my prayer, I just said Lord, I want to go to you, God. Like I want to go to you. I want to go to you. Like I want you back, and it was just a rushing in because I feel like we all have this God sized hole in our lives, and I feel like that's what I was trying to fill, and I was using acting as sort of a false idol, and I was using pride. And then I realized that those things were never going to fill, and so I just wanted God to rush in and fill that up. It's amazing, the work that He does in my life. You're talking about rejection today. It took me 120 auditions, or 110 auditions my first year out after NYU of no, of being told no before I got cast in my first job. It was a lot of rejection. And my life to this day, I get rejected probably ten times for every one time someone says yes to me. And without faith, I don't know how people do it. I really don't.

BS: That's a good point is a lot of people can't do it because when you have your identity rooted in your job or your dream, even though we want people to have successful careers and big dreams, if your identity is located there, it can be a trap. That's an amazing story. I also want to encourage people to check out your movie. It came out a few years ago, but it's going to be on PureFlix now called Where Hope Grows. It's a great film. What kind of encouragement do you want people to get from that film?

KP: I want people to know that really, it's about kingdom living, and really, it's about this idea that there's a character in it named Produce who has down syndrome, and he lives his life with so much love and joy and kindness, and he's so present. And my character, Calvin, he's a failed baseball.. he played major league baseball, he's a failed, he's drinking himself to death. So, there are some heavy themes in it, but its still, I think its.. I mean I would say it's a family film for people who have younger children. And it really is.. it's a movie about hope, and ultimately where that grows is in Jesus Christ, and so you see this guy forming a relationship, Calvin and Produce, but also Calvin and God. I think it's a pretty well told story in regards to I think a lot of Christian films are speaking to Christians, and I feel like the goal of this film was to speak to people who may not know Jesus yet; who may not understand what that looks like, and it's almost a coming up from the ground level point of view of what that looks like.

BS: It's a great film. I want to encourage people to check it out. Where Hope Grows on PureFlix. Thank you so much for joining us today. We appreciate your testimony and your life.

KP: Thank you so much. I appreciate being here, Bobby.

### DECLARATION – Bobby Schuller

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 my neighbor. Amen!

### MESSAGE – Bobby Schuller "The Rejection Was a Gift"

I've always loved that creed. It was in my personal life before we brought it here to the church, and it helped me so much because it brought me freedom! Freedom from feeling like my whole identity is wrapped up in what I do, especially like, not just morally but what I do for like a living, like my job, or my identity is wrapped up in what people say about me, or the things I have – the car I have.

Today we're going to talk a little bit about that, especially about what people say about you, and what it's like in life when you experience a kind of rejection. A rejection is something that all of us experience in different ways. It has an impact on us physically. The chemicals in our body actually change when we experience insult or rejection, and it's very hard to experience whenever it does.

Maybe you just experienced one, or maybe it's been a while, but there's another one coming – there will be, I promise. Whether it's a job you applied for and you didn't get it, or maybe you applied to your favorite college, or some kind of academic program and you were rejected. Or just being uninvited, being a part of a group of friends and you notice that your friends go out and you didn't get invited, and you sort of had this sneaking feeling that maybe you don't belong as much as you thought you did. Or you thought you were building this friendship and you wonder what's going on.

## The Rejection was a gift

In life, when this happens, so often, I know for me, it's easy to start spinning my wheels: why would they say something like that? Why'd they do something like that to me? I've had multiple nights of sleep ruined because of something a stranger randomly said to me. Today we're going to get freedom from that, okay? Let's get freedom from that, and learn that when somebody insults us, hurts us, or rejects us, in most cases, it's a gift, actually. It's a gift. You are so loved by God, and you probably have a lot of people in your life who love you. I know this church loves you, I love you, God loves you. And there are many people in this world that are going to be for you, that are going to root for you, but because of that, just to belong to Jesus, if you truly love what is good and hate what is evil, you're going to experience rejection. But can I tell you that rejection is a gift! It's a gift! Today we're going to believe that the rejection didn't happen to you, it happened for you. The rejection didn't happen to you, it happened for you. It's a brutal feeling, especially when you have a gift to give. Musicians, I'm sure you guys have had plenty of things you tried out for, and you got rejected and you're like I know I was the best one. I just didn't know the right people. Right? Or whatever it is. Can I tell you, friends, today we're going to learn that every rejection can be such a gift if you can see it the right way, if you can see it through the lens of the kingdom of God. I've been rejected lots of times, and not just by girls, by lots of things. There's been a.. just kidding. And I got the best one. There was this study that was done, and I really struggled on how to talk about this study. It involves the curse word A.H. All right? That's as far as we're going to go. We're going to refer to the cuss as A.H. If you're still struggling, H stands for hole. All right? So if you don't have it yet, maybe you're international, English isn't your first language, ask your neighbor 'what does A.H. stand for?' And if somebody asks you, don't say it out loud. I first ran into this study in Malcolm Gladwell's book *Outliers*, but I had a chance to read the study myself from the University of Michigan done by two professors Dov Cohen and Nisbett. And they wanted to study cultures of honor, and particularly about how people got offended. You can read the study yourself online. But it went like this. As so many great studies go, they have like a fake study that has nothing to do with what they're studying, and then a real dramatic thing in the middle to see how people responded, and it went like this. First, they asked the question "what's the insult that universally gets every male between the age of like 18 to 22. Like what's the thing we can say to them that strikes to the heart of them." And the word was A.H. All right? A.H. And if you say this to a college male, it gets.. you know? And so, they did this thing where they had all the males in this study fill out a questionnaire, and then the questionnaire didn't mean anything, it was just like a fake thing. You take the questionnaire down this very narrow hallway in the library that only really one person can fit through, and it was lined with filing cabinets, and you're supposed to go to the very end and put your questionnaire in there. But they had another 20-year-old kid or whatever who was also there who was pretending to be a part of the study but wasn't. And he would purposefully, as part of the study, open one of the things to block the way, put the thing in and as the kid tried to get around him, would nudge him a little bit like this, and then whisper under his voice 'A.H.' Like this. Enough so that the guy could hear it. And then when the kids came back, they measured a few things. First, they measured is their handshake grip tighter? And they took a saliva sample to see if their testosterone and cortisol went up, which shows like fight or flight, and a lot like anger. And then they also did this story about Steve and his girlfriend Jill and how Jill is being bothered and hit on by a mutual friend named Larry, and what should Steve do about it. And what they found was throughout.. now they had students from all over the country in the United States, and most of them had no change at all, but from one region of the world, almost universally they all went way up. The cortisol testosterone went up, the handshake was more firm, and they said that there would be a violent outcome between Steve and Larry. And now if you are a local American, you might know what that region is. It was the South. Right? The South. All the men from the South had this kind of reaction. Let me just pause here for a moment to say how much I adore the South. We lived in Oklahoma, which isn't really the South, it's the prairie, I guess, but the census considers it the South, but folks from Mississippi and Alabama probably don't consider it the South. Or maybe it's the South but it's not the deep South, but it's a similar culture. But anyway, they found that the men from the South who were living in Michigan had this kind of response. And then the funniest part of the story, the second part, they would have those same young men walk down that hallway, and then right as they're going down the hallway, they would have another guy, who was also a student and a member of the football team, he was 6' 3, 230 pounds, about my size, big, big guy, bruiser, he would come around and the guy that was walking towards him, they played like a game of chicken.

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And they wanted to see how long it would be before this bruiser guy, who by the way was a bouncer at the local bar, as well as being on the football team, how soon the person would give way. Now in all of the cases of the students from the North and from Michigan and the West Coast, it was in both cases about five or six feet, they would let the guy pass. But here's what was funny. With the guys from the South, if they were in the control group, meaning they hadn't just been insulted, they would actually give way about nine or ten feet away – double. Right? Because manners, its polite, let you go by. But of the group that had been insulted, it was two feet. Two feet! You know how close two feet is? You can smell the guy's breath. It's like this far! They're like chicken, you're like I'm not going to move. I'm not going to move. The guy before called me an A.H. Okay. In unpacking the study, the resolve was this is because in the South, Southerners are a people of honor. So it's a type of culture that you see throughout the world, that the South is made up in large part of Scotch Irish immigrants who were herders and shepherds, who had these sorts of unwritten rules from an immigrant community hundreds of years ago that brought those and created sort of the culture of the South. And this is Malcolm Gladwell's conclusion, as well. As someone who's very familiar with the South, I think that's partly true, but that's not the whole package. Yes, it's a culture of honor, and I would say that one, people in the South, aside from having amazing food.. you guys know what fried Okra is? I have a friend who's from California who didn't know what a critter was. And I'm like if you don't know what a critter is, how can you make a comment about the South at all. A very special place, the South. I actually love it. I love going there, and I love the people. But I actually think it's not as much the culture of honor, and it is, I think it's more about a culture of humility and manners that is really important, that it's important to be humble. Maybe that's a part of a culture of honor. But even more than that, it's this: it's that the South is religious. Look at a map here. This is a Honeycomb map of the United States. And you can see here the darker the blue region, the more religious it is. You get up there into Yankee territory, it's like God left a long time ago, right? They're not into it at all! Right? And you get down to like Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia and Tennessee, and it is like religious. It's the most religious part. And can I tell you, we all know what religion it is, right? They are Bible believing, Jesus loving Christians. And their grandpa and grandma was a Christian, and their great, great grandpa was a Christian, and it's a type of Christianity. It's our type of Christianity – Bible believing, Jesus loving Christians. There is something about our faith and our love for God, our love for what is good, and our hatred for what is evil are clear distinctions between right and wrong, right? That are so ingrained within us that so often, whether we're in the South or whether we're here in Orange County, that if you're a Christian, this is very often the part that's lost is the idea that being rejected, being insulted, being put down, being cussed out is part of the package of being a believer. And that we get freedom as Christians when we allow that stuff to not get under our skin. I think the reason these young men were so offended by the word A.H. is because it's clearly wrong, right, to call somebody a word like that. And there is actually something built in them to stand up for what is good and to stand up for what is right. That's actually what I think it is. I think it was in a way came from a good place, but the outcome was a bad thing. You find, and I've found this a lot, this is even something I had to work through as a young man, the urge to fight and to always tell it like it is, and to always push and make it clear like.. that stuff it.. there are some times when that has to happen for sure, but in life in general, we have to understand that there are just going to be A.H.'s out there that are going to treat us poorly, you know what I mean? I got to let go of the A.H. thing because this is not.. but that there are people out there, there are always going to be rude people. There are always going to be whatever – people who say things about you that aren't true, that aren't fair, that aren't good, but as Christians, here's one way we can see it. We can take Jesus words to heart. He says blessed are you. You know that word "blessed," "Makarios," also means happy. Happy are you, or "blessed are you when people insult you, and persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad for great is your reward in the kingdom of heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you." If you want to be like the prophets, and if you want to be like Jesus, you have to be okay with the fact that you'll be rejected and insulted and put down. Now this is not just a message about how to be holy from Jesus, this is good advice. It is good advice to not allow the random stupid things that strangers say or do to us to affect my joy, to affect my sleep at night, or to affect how I talk to my family when I get home, whether or not I'm all, right, upset. But we do it, and I do it, too, and it's something you can grow; you can work out of your life. Don't be like Marty McFly. You remember in Back to the Future? I rewatched the trilogy recently, and this only becomes a problem in Back to the Future II, which was a surprise.

## The Rejection was a gift

But Marty McFly, you can get him to do anything you want, if you just call him.. do you remember the word? Chicken. You can call Marty McFly a chicken, you can get him to do just about anything you want him to do. So many of us, we have key words, phrases or ideas, we have people in our life that just somehow know how to turn the screws on us. Be free from that. Don't allow what people say to you, or what they might think about you, or what they might post about you. Don't allow that to control your life. Today it's time to get freedom. Root your identity and your life in God's love and kindness for you and build your life around that. And have people in your life that aren't going to manipulate you. You'll get more freedom in life, you'll be smarter, and although you've been rejected by the world, or you've been rejected by your job, or you've been rejected by whoever, someone you're attracted to, or betrayed or insulted or uninvited, there is someone, the Lord, who loves you and there is a church, Shepherd's Grove, and there are people that are out there who will love you right where you're at, and be your friend right where you're at, and that's the best place to be. Can I get an amen from those who have been rejected? The rejection was a gift, my friend. A rejection was a gift. It was a gift. And it can be one of the best things that happens to you in life. This is what Peter was saying to the church in Asia Minor. Asia Minor is today Turkey, but back then it was really Ionia Greece. It was a Greek people that were in the Roman Empire, and it was full of immigrants and different people, and it was definitely a melting pot. A lot of Asia Minor, a lot of the cities there were economic hubs and cultural hubs, and the church just thrived there, and was doing well. When Peter writes a letter to the church, he's targeting a lot of these churches in Asia Minor. And he says to them, "as you come to him, Jesus, the living stone, rejected by humans but chosen by God and precious to him, you also are living stones." This is a very heavy idea and a good idea. "You're living stones, and you're being built into a spiritual house." By the way, that house in Hebrew also is the word temple. You're being built into a temple. The Jews always call the temple the house. "To be a holy priesthood offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ." We're in the scripture it says, "see I lay a stone in Zion, a chosen and precious cornerstone, and the one who trusts in him will never be put to shame. Now to you who believe this stone is precious, but to those who do not believe, the stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone, and the stone that causes people to stumble, and a rock that makes them fall. They stumble because they disobey the message, which is also what they were destined for. But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness and into his wonderful light." Peter is saying you look in a world around you, and you feel rejected by your neighbors, but never forget they rejected the chief stone. They rejected Jesus Christ. They rejected the best person who has ever lived. They rejected the most intelligent, joy-filled person who's ever existed. They rejected Him. And if you're anything like Him, they'll reject you, too. Isn't that encouraging? I think there's another part of this, as well, that in Asia Minor, it's easy for God's people to look around and kind of say we don't have a temple. So like here's the temple of Aphrodite. And this is also pulled from a video game, I'm sorry, but it's perfectly done. This is exactly how it was, actually. Imagine like you're a new believer and this is where your family goes. Look how beautiful it is, and this is where they have all the celebrations and the food and everything, and they're like won't you come. And you are kind of like hey Peter, can we have a cool temple. Like can we have like a cool building? And Peter says you're living stones. You're living stones! This building, the reason I have to pull it from a video game is its just rubble today. It's not even there anymore. You go by and it's just a couple of pillars knocked over. And that's how every building will be. Except for one: the temple of God, which is made of people like you. If you love the Lord, and the sad thing is if you really love your neighbor, and you live out with the kind of kindness and goodness that God has called you to, some people will reject you, as well. Is that okay? You are a living stone, but today, my friend, I want you to get freedom from the idea that someone you barely know who rejects you can control your life. There's a lot of talk, and there should be, about how speech harms people, and I think that some of that talk is important, I think it's good to do some training about protecting people from harmful and hateful speech, and yet I think what's better is if we can teach people a greater strength, and that is rather than always trying to make, especially adults safer, we should make people stronger. And this is what the gospel is intended to do is to show us that our identity and our life is not rooted in what angry people or hateful people say about you. You should let it go. And I want you to be the kind of person that can hear the most offensive, hurtful thing in the world and let it roll off your back like water off a duck's back. You can be that way when you know that there are people out there who love you as you are, and you can sort of move on. There is freedom when we find our value in what God says about us.

## The Rejection was a gift

And we train our bodies, especially through prayer, or through other things that the church offers, to not be obsessive about what people think about us. But things like social media, and other things like that, are training, especially young people, to do the opposite. To be obsessive about what random strangers we've never thought of what they say about us, and let's let it go! Let's get some freedom today. It's like being cussed out in French. You ever been cussed out in French? It's not a big deal unless you speak French. It sounds cool. But imagine for a moment that after the church service I'm standing here and I'm talking to people, and a random gentleman, who only speaks French, didn't like what I said, and he came up and he started cursing me out in French. Now I speak a little French. I had a teacher in high school, and she told us all to have to names, and the name that I picked was "poisson." And she said you can't do poisson. You can do Robert. Poisson means fish. And I said I know. But it's the only French word I know because of Little Mermaid, that's right. Le poisson. Le poisson. That's the only French word he says in the whole thing. So I was like I'll just be poisson. She's like that means fish. I was like I thought it meant chef, but okay, fish it is. And so the only phrase I really learned was (SPEAKS FRENCH). That's may I leave and go use the restroom, please. The W.C. What am I talking about? I'm sorry. Oh yeah, the French guy! So imagine I'm down here and a guy starts cursing me out in French. All of us who don't speak French would simply kind of look at him and sort of scratch our heads. And we might even start laughing, you know, because it's in a language we don't understand. And he may get super aggressive and raise his voice even more, and we might just go like this. What if we could get the kind of freedom in the same way if somebody cusses us out in English. What if we could get the same kind of freedom when somebody says something about us or betrays us or whatever, where we just realize it doesn't really say much about us. It says everything about this person. And almost look upon the person with pity and pray for them. And hope that maybe God can bring them freedom from whatever's driving this anger and sadness and fear or whatever it is. I want you to know that you may have recently experienced rejection, but it'll happen again, and you can get freedom from the opinions of others. The rejection was a gift. It was a gift. Sometimes when you're rejected, God is protecting you. There might have been a job that you thought was your dream job, but you never realized that it would have been the worst job on earth. You would have been unhappy. Your marriage would have fallen apart. You would have started being meaner to your kids and you would have lost a ton of money on the drive because of the commute because we live in Southern California. Or whatever. There might have been a person in your life that you thought you were supposed to be with and the person you know, you thought they would have been amazing, but if you would have married that person or whatever, they would have been horrible to you. Or it might be that there was a group of friends, but you were rejected from them, but if you'd have gotten more involved with that friends, you would have noticed that you'd become more of a shallow person, or more vain, or less happy, or compared yourself to them. God is constantly allowing us to experience these things in many ways because He's protecting us from something we don't know. Sometimes, when we're rejected, God is forcing us to choose. There are all sorts of things in life that happen where maybe even have two things in life but you can't have both. God's asking you to choose between the two. That might be happening in your life now. Sometimes God is showing you where you can grow. And this is, if you have the strength for it, this is where something like getting rejected from a job or other things, even if it's done poorly, even if it was offensive, you might be able to find something in there that your friend's wouldn't tell you about yourself just because they love you too much. And finally, and this happens all the time, sometimes God is just preparing you for a bigger thing. Maybe He's preparing you for leadership. Hear me, this is the last thing I'm going to say. If you want to be a leader, a big influencer in the world, you must prepare yourself for lots of unfair criticism. You must prepare yourself. Like when I started and I prepared for this role, I prepared myself for criticism of what I did, but I didn't prepare myself for criticism of what I didn't do. You know what I mean? And you think about the early church, they were called cannibals because they ate the body and blood of Jesus. They were called incestuous because they would call each other brother and sister, and yet many of them were married. In life, if you're leading, especially if you're leading for God, you just have to kind of be okay with the fact that you'll become a target of slander and that's a really sad thing, but it will just happen. Sometimes the little insults that you experience in life might be God preparing you to stop finding your identity in what other strangers say and find your identity in Him. If you get cut off on the freeway, or if somebody gives you the bird on the 5 today, and you can't sleep tonight, you're not ready for leadership. It's just that simple.

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If what some random person you've never met and are never going to see again, and it has no impact on your life at all, except you might get to where you're going three seconds later than you would have, you have to be ready for people you know or kind of know or respect to say things or assume things about you. You just have to grow as a person and be okay with the fact that people are going to criticize you. I would challenge you to think of one world changer, whether they're on your team or not on your team who doesn't come under constant criticism from someone else. If you're not ready for that, you're not ready to lead. And it might be that the reason you've experienced some more offense lately is God is actually training you to learn what it means to just shrug your shoulders and just say nah, it's okay. I'm a child of God. Or He might be teaching you that hey, this is where I grow. But no matter what, I want you to stop looking at rejection as something to be angry about, something to be offended by, something that's unfair, and instead, look at it as a gift. The rejection was a gift. It didn't happen to you, it happened for you. You can thank God for that. Lord, we do. We ask you to build in us the Holy Spirit that confirms in us that you're still doing a good thing in us. We accept, sadly, with broken hearts, that many people will not accept us as we are, and we just let that go to you, Lord. We ask you to help us grow to be deeper in love and kindness. Help us to see these rejections as gifts, and help us, Lord, to be more like you, Jesus. We love you, and we thank you, it's in your name we pray, amen.

### BENEDICTION – Bobby Schuller

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.