

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. 8
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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GOOD MORNING – Bobby Schuller (BS)

This is the day the Lord has made. We will rejoice and be glad in it. Good morning. Sorry Hannah's not here today. We got in a huge fight this morning, so she decided not to come. I went and saw "Thor: Ragnarok" without her. Just kidding. Hannah's sick and can't be here. She's just got this cold thing, so. Anyway, she sends her love to everybody and hey we're just so glad you're here today.

Would you turn around to those who are standing next to you. Greet them warmly in the name of the Lord and just say God loves you and so do I.

Hey it's going to be a good day today. Way to go! You started your week off right. You didn't have to. You went to church. Sunday's the first day of the week. I feel like that's going to be on my gravestone. I say that so much. I just think it's so important that we remember that the weekend shouldn't be our reward for a long week of hard work. Rather, the weekend should be how we begin our week. It should be this idea that we inherit the Holy Spirit and we realign our hearts and minds that we go into our workweek with a positive attitude, full of joy, and man, we're just so glad you're here today, and so honored that you're here, even if you got tricked into coming here somehow, your girlfriend or something. We're just glad you're here and I hope you leave encouraged.

Father, we thank you that you love us. We thank you that we don't have to manage our reputation around you. You see us exactly as we are, with all our skeletons and all of our personality flaws and our weirdness and everything, and you just say that you love us. And so Lord, we receive that, in Jesus' name. We thank you that we don't have to prove ourselves to anybody, and we just love you. And we pray that today we would do a better job than we ever have of building our lives in response to that love. God, we love you, it's in Jesus' name we pray, amen.

SCRIPTURE – Luke 14:7-11 – Bobby Schuller

Hear the reading of the word of the Lord, Luke chapter 14 verse 7:

When Jesus noticed how the guest picked the places of honor at the table, He told them this parable. When someone invites you to a wedding feast, don't take the place of honor. For a person more distinguished than you may have been invited. If so, the host who invited both of you will come and say to you, give this person your seat. Then humiliated you will have to take the least important place. But when you're invited, take the lowest place so that when your host comes, he will say to you, friend, move up to a better place, then you'll be honored in the presence of all the other guests. For all those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.

May God add His blessing to the reading of this, His holy word.

INTERVIEW – with Andrew Schwab (AS) – Bobby Schuller (BS)

BS: Well, our guest today is Andrew Schwab. He's a front man and lead singer and lyricist for the Christian metal band, Project 86, which has achieved international success as an independent group since its inception in 1996. In addition to his successful music career, Andrew is also an accomplished author of several books and a talented graphic artist, and he's very tall, too. You're taller than me.

AS: I'm cheating. I'm wearing boots.

BS: Okay, all right. His most recent book, The Tin Soldiers focus on a lost generation of young men, who are searching for meaning and purpose. Would you welcome with me, Andrew Schwab. Hey sir, how are you?

AS: Fine.

BS: So your band is awesome. I actually enjoy listening to me when I work out, which is rare, but.._

AS: Oh.. nice.. thanks a lot.

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BS: ..but your band is called Project 86. Why don't you tell us a little bit about how you guys landed on that name?

AS: Well the band's been around since the 90's, the late 90's, and back then it was really cool if you were playing alternative music or rock music to have a word with a number in your name.

BS: Okay.

AS: It's not as cool..

BS: Blink 182.

AS: ..anymore.

BS: Sure.

AS: But we chose the number 86 because it referenced being rejected and we're separated, and we felt like that was a good double meaning, almost, in the sense that we were all Christian artists, Christian musicians coming together to hopefully play music, not just for Christians, but for the greater rock and heavy music community. But there's a risk in that because maybe when they find out what we believe, they reject us.

BS: Yes.

AS: It was also meant to be applied to..

BS: Even people in the metal community would reject you.

AS: ..exactly.

BS: Yes, sure.

AS: So the idea also that it was always a goal for us to have our own sound, not to be a Christian version of something else that was maybe more popular, or more accepted in the general market, per se, so that was a risk, as well. So we felt like Project 86 was putting ourselves out there, potentially being rejected.

BS: It's funny because I think about like the 1960's and 70's in the Jesus movement, there were these kind of music people that were coming out of the rock world, they were getting saved through like Calvary Chapel and Vineyard Movements and stuff, and they were doing this exact kind of thing, and they just got skewered by the Christian community. You guys now being heavy metal, which is like a whole other level of rock, has an angry or rigid sound to it. A lot of people aren't used to it. A lot of people will criticize you guys or even heavy metal Christian bands in general, not being Christian enough. I mean like what's your response to that?

AS: You know it's funny, when I hear people try to classify the band as being rock or metal or heavy, etc., when we started, we were like one of the heaviest bands, and as we devolved, we've become a little bit more rock centric, but there are so many bands that are so much heavier than us. We're considered light, almost now.

But it all depends on who you're comparing; whatever band you're talking about to or whatever sound to. But any time you play anything that's a little less orthodox or mainstream you run the risk of being ostracized by a certain audience, etc. And we've always appealed to a certain demographic. A lot of them are guys. A lot of them are guys who like listening to music when they work out. Or people who are going through a hard time or a difficulty in their life, a trial. And that seems to be consistent throughout the years in doing this is the people who are going through difficult times really relate to the music.

And so I don't think it's for necessarily everybody but for the people that connect with it, they connect with it deeply.

BS: And that's the other thing, is you guys have such a great heart behind your music and I think that's a big part of like what often gets lost.

Actually I think it was a few months ago, we were interviewing Brian Welch from KORN and he said something similar. He felt like his music was giving voice to a lot of like kids in particular that had a rough life, and didn't have a way, like it gave them a way to feel angry about it. I mean I even think you read the Psalms, I mean look how angry David is..

AS: Totally.

BS: .. and if you guys are okay with that part of our faith, as well, which I think is great. Like one of the things you talk about is like our music may not be positive, but it's honest. Tell me a little bit about that.

AS: Echoing Brian's sentiment, who's a good friend of mine, by the way. He texts me every now and then, and he's back in KORN now, which I think is such a cool thing because he left the band; not to divert to talking about Brian, but just echoing that sort of idea and that philosophy.

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He left the band because it wasn't the right place for him for where he was at in being a new Christian and then grew a little bit in his faith, and was able to re-enter that and has had a positive impact, not just on the culture of the KORN fan base, but also within the band, which is really interesting.

But to answer your question, the idea of honesty when it comes to art is sort of a misnomer because you're naturally doing something that's creative, and therefore up to the interpretation of the individual listening or looking in.

But when we reference honesty in the context of the lyrics or the music, its speaking about emotional honesty in trying to not portray the Christian experience, or the faith experience, or the life of someone who has faith as great, perfect, which unfortunately is a lot of the CCM community. That's okay, I think that's appealing to a certain mentality as well, and there's a place for that.

BS: What does CCM mean, by the way?

AS: Contemporary Christian Music.

BS: Oh okay, cool.

AS: Contemporary Christian Music.

BS: I always think Crystal Cathedral Ministries. It's a hang-up, I've got to.. it's a long story. We won't get into that.

AS: That's a whole other discussion.

BS: Yes.

AS: That's funny. When you're trying to be emotionally honest in your music, you're trying to essentially say, hey, I'm going through this thing sometimes, and I'm not going to pretend like I'm doing awesome and that's okay.

BS: Yes.

AS: And this is how I feel. You know what I mean?

BS: That's right.

AS: And then other days, man, I just want to take over the world, because I feel like my life is going the right direction, and I have a power greater than me behind me. But to portray the whole of the human experience in the context of faith, that's the goal.

BS: That's awesome, Andrew. Andrew Schwab from Project 86. Check out their music. It's awesome. Before we let you go, tell me about tell me about Tin Soldiers, real quick.

AS: Thank you, guys, by the way, and thanks for having me. Thank you for having me. This is the most recent literary work I put my hands on. It's called The Tin Soldiers. This is an actual work book. Its geared towards guys, emerging generations of men, as well as men in general, just who are maybe questioning where they're at in life, where am I going, what's my purpose. It's meant to sort of break it down and help you to hone in on where you're headed, and maybe what God is doing at this specific moment with your life.

BS: Great. The book is called Tin Soldiers. Andrew Schwab, Project 86, thank you, sir, so much.

AS: Yes, man..

BS: We appreciate you and love you.

AS: ..pleasure's all mine.

BS: God bless you.

DECLARATION – Bobby Schuller

Friends, 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.

MESSAGE – Bobby Schuller "Serenity in the Love of God"

Today I'm going to be talking about that one simple fact that we truly are loved by God. If we can believe that, we inherit a sort of soul armor; a resilience to the pains and sufferings of living. That if we know that despite when we mess up, some people won't forgive us, some people won't let it go, some people will disrespect us, we have a God in heaven and on earth who loves us, always will love us, and that no one in the universe loves us in the same way or to the same degree that He does. We say this thing every week, and today's a bit of a one off, and I wanted to just take time to sort of refocus on this creed that we say constantly to remember what it does for the soul.

We get a lot of criticism because for some people, that creed can be offensive, but it's biblical. People say what do mean I'm not what I do? If someone murders somebody, he's a murderer, right?

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If someone has a million bucks, they're a millionaire. If someone is said to be an Olympian, they probably are. See my point is that yes it's true that in many ways we can be identified in those ways, but to God, just in the same way that a mother doesn't think of her Olympian child as an Olympian, or a failure, or a winner, or a loser, the mother thinks of her child as her child. He or she belongs to her. And nothing can happen to change that fact. God's love is so much greater that even the love of the greatest mother or father, God's love for you is so enduring and true, and infallible, and unchanging that there's nothing you can do to lose that.

And so for the believer, our goal is faith; to believe that what the scriptures say about God's love is true and to build our lives in response to the true deep conviction of that fact. If we do that, we inherit all we ever wanted and all we ever needed. I'm convinced, you see, that shame always leads to sin, and confidence in God's love always leads to righteousness. Always.

So today, I actually want to talk about serenity and how reputation management destroys serenity, and how we can just today let go of needing to prove ourselves to everybody, we can let go of always having to be honored, always having to be respected, we can let go of all those things today and know that pleasing God with our lives is enough, and more than enough.

It's like this: I remember I had the biggest crush on Hannah for years. I met her in high school. Many of you know this story, but I just pursued her for such a long time, but also didn't pursue her because she was dating a friend of mine, and there were layers, right? And I'm not even sure she knew my name. She certainly wasn't into me. And I remember after this long six year journey, finally, Hannah and I started dating, and fell in love, and I remember that one day she said those words – I love you. And it was like the greatest thing I ever heard.

And I will tell you that especially when I was younger, was easily offended. I played ice hockey, I was a right wing, and one season the only record I ever set was for that season, most minutes in the penalty box for fighting. I just loved to fight and actually our coaches encouraged it. I digress.

So I was often an easily offended guy. And I remember after Hannah told me that she loved me, it was that next week somebody said something, I forget what it was, but really offensive and I just literally didn't care. And it was one of the first times I experienced that, where somebody was over the top, disrespectful, hurtful, unfair, publicly shaming, and it was like water off a ducks back. I just didn't care.

And you can probably, if you've ever been in love, you probably know that feeling. You're so overwhelmed with joy, I mean especially me, this dream girl of mine said she loved me. It's like who cares what some idiot says about me in a cafeteria.

And though every love except God's is fallible, every person you love will let you down from time to time; they will absolutely hurt you from time to time. If we can have that same kind of response in life that God, the creator of the universe adores us.

That anyone who touches you touches the apple of God's eye. That you're His beloved sons and daughters. That He would do anything, including send His only begotten son in place of you. He would do anything for you to go to heaven to know Him, to be with Him. He thinks about you, He watches you, He's involved in your life. To know that, and not just know it here, but to believe it in your heart, in your guts, well that gives you a sort of strength, resilience, and more importantly, a tranquility, peace of mind, and joy and life that always leads to holiness.

That's why we teach morals, but we also teach this because God's love is where the power to be a good person comes from. It doesn't come from trying harder, it comes from the confidence that even when I mess up, even when people put me down, even when people reject me or say things about me, I can just let it go because the King of kings, the Lord of lords, the master of the universe, well, I am His beloved. And you are. You're His beloved and He'll never let you go. Isn't that good news? So I believe that all of us, what many of us really want in life, we think about it, we recognize that it's true, and I mentioned this a couple weeks ago at the end of my As a Man Thinketh series. I'm going to repeat this again because it's so important: we want serenity. We want tranquility of mind. We want to feel safe, fulfilled, unworried, relaxed, satisfied. That's what we want. And there's only one thing that can do that and that's the love of God.

And I think that we want this tranquility and serenity of life, and we're willing to do just about anything to get it. Many of us, especially now, there's a lot of talk about financial freedom, and the idea that one day I'll be financially free. And I think that's good, by the way. You should invest and build a business and be financially free and remember that Shepherd's Grove is a tax deductible 501-C3. We appreciate your gifts.

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No, I'm saying that we should strive for those things, but if you think that you're going to have serenity of mind when you get financial security if you don't have it now, you're dead wrong. If you think that you're going to get serenity when you go on vacation, but you don't have it now, you're wrong. Anybody with kids on vacation know that feeling? Kids on vacation. It's like more work. It's like extra work.

So my point is not to make you feel hopeless but to give you hope. You don't need money to have peace of mind. You don't need financial freedom and you don't need a vacation. You can have serenity of mind right now. Right now. Right now. Right in your bones. That no matter where you go you've got this thing inside of you that cannot be shaken. Peace of mind, tranquility, safety, and because of that, you can let go of reputation management. And I am convinced that in our modern world, the number one thing disrupting people's peace of mind, tranquility, serenity, the kind that leads to holiness is reputation management. Reputation management destroys our peace of mind. It is not worth it. Can I get an amen? Look, first of all, every preacher is preaching to a mirror. This is a sermon for Bobby Schuller, okay? I can tell you that when I am concerned about managing how people think about me, what they say about me, what they see about me, I lose something in my soul and so do you. You lose power, you lose tranquility, you lose intelligence, you lose a lot and it's not worth it.

Today, we can let go of our need for approval, of our need to prove ourselves to others, and just let it go to God and live our lives to please Him. Can I just say people say stupid things and I am one of them? And I am going to be gracious when people say stupid things to me, so that when I say stupid things to them, they might let it go. People don't always give credit for the work we do. That's okay, too. It hurts, it's a bummer, but if all we're living for is the honor of others, the credit of other people, we are living for a stressed out, disappointing life, let me just tell you. There is nothing like getting true approval from God. To meditate on the idea that God is saying good things, and God sees the things you do in secret. He sees all the good, and all the evil, and He still loves you, and we just can trust that when we do good, look in general, whether we do good or evil, it comes around. If you've done something rotten, just tell someone and apologize. Just get it at the root. And if you're doing good and nobody is noticing, just trust that it's going to come around. It will. It will. It always does. It's going to come around in your relationships, in your business, and can we all just say that we cannot hide our lives from our kids. We can't hide our lives from our colleagues. And we can't hide our lives from our friends. If you do good for others, whether they say it or not, they see it. And if you do evil, they see it. So trust that what we do will have a lasting impact on eternity, and don't worry about getting credit or being insulted or being disrespected or put down. Let it go. Live your life for the approval of the Lord and I promise you will have one of the most joyful lives, and people will think what can I do to be like her? What can I do to be like him?

I know you've heard this before, but never forget it: your ego is not your amigo. That's right, ladies and gentlemen. Your ego is hurting you. That's not an original. You can clap the guy on the internet that wrote it. That wasn't from me. I don't know who did, but let me just tell you that that is so true. Your ego is not your amigo. When you look back at the worst investment decisions you've made, or business deals, life decisions, very often you were making a decision about your ego, rather than something that's actually good. Again, Bobby Schuller's preaching to a mirror here. Your ego gets in the way, it clouds your mind. And just simply asking the question when you make an important decision, 'how much is my ego in this' is such a wise, prudent thing to do, and that question alone will lead to a more successful life, in my opinion. Jesus gives us this wisdom that we shouldn't build our lives for the approval of others. We should build our lives for the approval of God, and if we do that, we're going to do really well in life. In Luke chapter 14, as I read earlier, Jesus is at this house of a prominent Pharisee, and this is really important because in Jesus' day, there was almost this cast system in place where the rabbis and the religious leaders, they were like the highest, how they belonged the most, they were most respected and loved. Then you had these other people, they were outcasts. And then you kind of had these people in the middle, trying to like get closer to the people in power. And so Jesus is invited to this feast. And it's at the house of this prominent famous Pharisee. We've forgotten his name, by the way, because in Jesus' day everybody cared, but today, nobody cares about that guy. They only care about one guy – the red-headed step-child of the religious community, Jesus Christ, who was standing over in the corner trying to teach people about the ways of God. And it was in that space that Jesus asks. Somebody came in, it was the Sabbath, and they asked Jesus for healing, and He just turns to these religious folks and He asks them, hey, is it okay to heal on the Sabbath? What do you say? And nobody says anything. Why?

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Because they want to get the approval of this prominent famous Pharisee. Jesus heals the guy, a miracle, right in their midst; right in front of all of them. And guess what they say. They're not interested in what God is doing. They're not interested on whether or not it's okay to heal or not heal on the Sabbath. They're interested in one thing – the opinion of the host, this prominent famous wealthy guy. And so everybody now, so Jesus sees this. He's like this is amazing. A room full of religious people that claim to love the Lord. They just don't even care that a miracle just.. they just don't care.

And He's watching, and all these guys are vying to get close to this person of power, get his number. Get his digits. Let me get a follow back on Twitter. Jesus says to them, "Look, when someone invites you to a wedding feast, do not take the place of honor, for a person more distinguished than you may have been invited. If so, the host who invited both of you will come and say to you, give this person your seat. Then, humiliated, you will have to take the least important place. But when you're invited, take the lowest place so that when your host comes up, he will say to you 'friend, move up to a better place.' Then you will be honored in the presence of all the other guests. For all those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted." God lays low those who exalt themselves and God raises up those who humble themselves. It is law. When nobody else sees the good you do, when nobody else exalts you, I promise you, God will be the host of that banquet. He will come to you sitting at the foot of that table, and will say friend, friend of mine, come sit next to me. And He will honor you in the presence of your enemies. He will honor you in the presence of your colleagues and your friends.

What you do in secret is the most powerful thing you do. What you say in secret is the truest thing you believe. And when it's in secret, only one other person other than you sees it, and it's the Lord, and He rewards the good that you do in secret. He does, He does. When you do good in secret.. there's a part of me that almost wants to do good in secret and hopes nobody notices because I have seen what God does to people like that. He blesses them, He pours out favor, He opens opportunity. It always, always comes around. That's why Jesus said "everything that is whispered in the rooms will be shouted from the rooftops." That's a scary thing, isn't it?

So believe that what you do in secret is seen by God, and when they're good things, man, He is going to pour out blessing on that. What you say in secret, it's the most true. Like if I say to you, man, I love you, but in secret I'm like, man I hate that guy. Which one is more true? What happens in secret is what's most powerful. So when you do things in secret, good or ill, it's like planting a seed in the ground. It will take root, it will spring up, so if you mess up, just confess it to a loving friend, receive grace, and when you do good and nobody recognizes, let it go.

This is a great quote from Matt Chandler. He says, "God is awesome. He doesn't need us to be awesome. He needs us to be obedient." So today, do what you love to do. Enjoy your life.

Do what God has called you to do, but don't worry about how people view you. Only think about what God thinks about you.

And I'll just finish with this. I came up with some practical things that when it comes to letting go of reputation management, I promise you, if you do these five things, you are going to be one of the most joyful, happy people anybody knows. Are you ready? If you want, you can pull out your camera and take pictures of these.

Look, can we just begin by saying the people we love the most, hurt us the most. And that's okay. If we put these things into practice, we will grow as such joyful people, with serenity of mind and peace of mind. The first thing Paul says when he talks about the characteristics of love, the first thing he says is love is patient. The choir knows, because they heard my sermon already. You didn't say it in the first service, guys, I'm sorry. No, no, you didn't. Like one guy did, but not all of you. Love is patient. It's patient.

So number one: don't leap to judgment. You know there's this temptation that especially when we are feeling stressed and angry and not appreciated enough, we jump to judge, to point the finger, to say you did this. Don't do that. Let it go, and remember, take a second to just listen. The soul is fragile. It is very fragile. And the toughest person you know is tender hearted. In fact, very often, the toughest people you know are some of the most tender hearted people. One reason they're so tough is because they've experienced so much emotional pain. I've learned this to be true. Very, very true of a lot of men, too. That though they may stonewall you and act like it's no big deal, it hurts. Don't judge. Don't leap to judgment. Leap to understanding before you judge.

Number two, and this is true in teams, especially, or anytime there is something like that, do your best to take the blame and give the credit.

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A lot of times, when as a team, the team deserves the credit or the blame, but if you can take the blame for your part in the failure of a team, and give away the credit of the team's success to your team members, people are going to trust you, appreciate you, and they're going to take a lot of blame, and they're going to give you a lot of credit, and you're going to create a much more healthy environment than where everybody's vying for recognition.

Number three: don't one-up people. Encourage people. This is a major temptation for especially leaders. I remember not long ago, a few months ago, I was in a gathering of really important people for this big event, and it was one of these like black tie type things, and I was at this table and I was invited to sit with a really prominent pastor. Everybody in this room would know this person. And we're sitting there, and there's about ten people sitting around this table, and I watched as this guy I respect so much, and still respect so much, was sitting there one upping everybody. Some guy would say, 'we had a thousand people show up at our event.' He'd go 'oh that's interesting, I had a hundred thousand people show up to an event I recently did and dah, dah, dah, dah, dah.' And then somebody else would say, 'I've been to Israel five times,' and he'd go 'oh that's interesting. I've been to Israel twenty times.'

And in this moment, I was feeling so awkward around him, and thinking what a missed opportunity that if this guy said wow, what was Israel like? Or said, wow, congratulations on such a big event, encouraging people. Instead, there was no malice in it, I watched as he was one upping people, and I left that dinner with kind of a bad taste in my mouth for this guy.

About a week later, something's going on and I'm meeting with another pastor, and I noticed, I one upped him. He was talking about his music program, and I was like well my music program; I love you guys, you know. And it was like the Holy Spirit brought it to my mind and I was like oh my gosh I do the same thing. And so much of that is coming from, not to get personal: I want to be a respected pastor, I want to do well.

So all of us, we have our journeys in which we need to let go of that stuff and recognize that for eternity, it's so much better to encourage others rather than to vie for our place at the table. It's so much better to give up our seat to others, rather than to vie for that seat of honor. Never one-up people. Always encourage people. Let other people one-up you.

Number four: if it hurts, say so, but don't hit back. This is the most important one. And this is usually going to be with your spouse and your kids, or your parents. If it hurts, say so but don't hit back. This is something we have to learn is that it does hurt, right? And so our response very often is power, fight back, but don't do the: 'well you do the,' 'well you said this,' 'well you did this to me,' 'well you forgot that,' 'well you,' right? No, you just, I mean there is something powerful that when you're on the other side of that and you do something hurtful and someone doesn't hit back, but instead they go that really hurts, and then there's that awkward silence. That's so good for both people. To even say something that really hurts and that's not you, that's not you, I think really makes a big difference.

And finally, and this is the last one. Number five: pray for your competitors. Jesus teaches us to love our enemies. He says everybody loves people that love them. Everybody greets people that greet them. Everybody honors people that honor them. But its special, it's special if you pray for those who hate you; if you love those who are your enemies. I know a lot of you listening, you're like Bobby, I don't have any enemies, and I want to say to you that in our modern world, most of us don't have like enemies, but we have competitors. Pray for your competitors. Pray for the people you're jealous of. Pray for the people that are doing better than you. Pray for the people that are succeeding in ways that you're succeeding, and pray that they succeed. Pray that they thrive. Pray that they get the things you want in life, and watch how that frees your soul of a toxic poison that is keeping your mind spinning its wheels, worried all the time. You begin to train yourself to walk in the easy rhythms of grace when you let go of having to manage what people think about you. You just live for God's approval and you'll be given such an amazing gift; a tranquility and serenity of mind. Amen?

Lord, we ask for this, in Jesus' name. And we love you, 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.