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GOOD MORNING – Bobby Schuller (BS) and Hannah Schuller (HS)

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

HS: And welcome church family. We are so, so happy that you're here. Today fight the good fight of faith, my friends, because victory, not some day, but in the here and now is in Jesus' Christ. You are loved.

BS: Amen. We're so glad that you're here today. We believe God has a good word for you this morning, and we're going to trust that you're going to leave here full of life and full of fresh vision for the coming week. And so Lord, we ask for that. We ask in Jesus' name for the fullness of your spirit. We ask for the renewing of our mind and our hearts. We ask, Lord, that today we would leave here different than when we came in, with a different attitude, different vision, a different heart, renewed, strengthened, and ask for it in Jesus' name, amen.

HS: Amen.

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

SCRIPTURE – Genesis 18,9-15, 21,1-7 – Hannah Schuller

In preparation for the message, Genesis 18 and 21. "Where is your wife Sarah?" they asked him. "There, in the tent," he said. Then one of them said, "I will surely return to you about this time next year, and Sarah your wife will have a son." Now Sarah was listening at the entrance to the tent, which was behind him. Abraham and Sarah were already very old, and Sarah was past the age of childbearing. So Sarah laughed to herself as she thought, "After I am worn out and my lord is old, will I now have this pleasure?" Then the Lord said to Abraham, "Why did Sarah laugh and say, 'Will I really have a child, now that I am old?' Is anything too hard for the Lord? I will return to you at the appointed time next year, and Sarah will have a son." Sarah was afraid, so she lied and said, "I did not laugh." But he said, "Yes, you did laugh." Now the Lord was gracious to Sarah as he had said, and the Lord did for Sarah what he had promised. Sarah became pregnant and bore a son to Abraham in his old age, at the very time God had promised him. Abraham gave the name Isaac to the son Sarah bore him. When his son Isaac was eight days old, Abraham circumcised him, as God commanded him. Abraham was a hundred years old when his son Isaac was born to him. Sarah said, "God has brought me laughter, and everyone who hears this will laugh with me." And she added, "Who would have said to Abraham that Sarah would nurse children? Yet I have borne him a son in his old age." Amen.

INTERVIEW – John Starke (CB) and Bobby Schuller (BS)

John Starke is a pastor and author from New York City. He currently serves as the lead pastor of Apostles Church Uptown. John has written a handful of books, as well as Christian publications over the last few years. His newest book, *The Secret Place of Thunder: Trading Our Need to Be Noticed for a Hidden Life with Christ*, looks at how we can live our lives for Christ, and not as a performance for others. BS: Hey, John Starke, welcome. Thank you for joining us today, especially on a Sunday from New York City, I assume. Tell us here for people who are watching a little bit about your story, your faith journey, and kind of what brought you to write this book.

JS: Yes, well as you know earlier in the pandemic, the whole world, just like you guys, here in New York it shut down everything, had to be at home. And in my context, people were having to stay home and not be around other people, and what I had found was people who were experiencing a lot of anxiety and not because they were fearful of being sick. They couldn't be seen. They weren't able to prove themselves, show themselves. They didn't know if they were still doing okay, if they were liked by their supervisors or whatever.

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And I think it was exposing something, it wasn't creating something, but it was exposing this lesson I think we've been learning from the world that says what's most important about you is what you can show, what you can display. And what Jesus is trying to show us and leads us to is actually its less about what you can show, but its more about who you are in the presence of the Father in the secret place, as He says in the Sermon on the Mount. And so He kind of leads us away from maybe a fragile way of living, of living in public, putting ourselves on display, in more of a stable resilient life of a secret life with the Father.

BS: COVID really was one of those amazing global, spiritual experiences, actually. It wasn't meant to be that, of course, but when you force billions of people to stay in one place, and not go to parties, not go to work, not go to the store, not do all these things, for a long period of time, it's interesting how different people would respond to that. And I think this book comes at a good time, because actually I did notice, I feel like after COVID that social media kind of went down a little bit. Did you see that at all?

JS: Yes, I think so.

BS: I think it's a good..

JS: Ye, and I think, so see, I think it's a good thing.

BS: And so I think for Christians a lot of time, even pastors, especially pastors who struggle with approval, all Christians and people in general struggle with the likes or the trophies or the money or the different things, and those are fine, but God offers us something better, and you're helping people find that in your book, aren't you.

JS: Yes, that's the hope is that people kind of see in the life and the words of Jesus a way to be with the Father who sees you, and knows you, knows all the secrets, knows all the darkness, and He still loves you. Our world tells us a message of be yourself, but it's really only a kind of self, a kind of life that they're going to approve, so it's kind of a mixed message. You actually have to live a certain way, or you'll be ignored, looked over and passed over. But with the Father, secret life of the Father, so it gives you a vision that you can actually be yourself and be loved. The world will give you one, but not the other. You can be yourself but may not be loved, or you can perform, not be yourself and be loved. But the Father is really the only one who can invite you in to be yourself and be loved.

BS: I really like the line you just said, the secret life of the Father. It reminds me of the Sermon on the Mount, how often Jesus is talking about what you do in secret, that's where the Father is. What you see in secret, that's what the Father sees. That's where the real reward is, is in the secret place nobody else sees. And your book is called The Secret Place of Thunder. How did you get that name?

JS: It comes from Psalm 81. And I really, probably read that Psalm a million times, but I felt like it probably discovered it for the first time in a long season of depression where I really; you can't really perform your way out of depression, you're just kind of.. all those resources that you can make yourself feel good, are kind of not there for you. You're not a very impressive person in emotional darkness. But it was in that season where I prayed a little bit through the Psalms and came to Psalm 81 where he says "open your mouth wide, and I will hear you from the secret place of thunder. Open your mouth wide and I will fill it." And I didn't know what that meant, I just wanted it, whatever that was. And so I was just praying and longing, and I think at that moment, that story is that the Lord really.. I didn't hear voices, I didn't see visions, but a deep sense of His intimate presence and love. And it didn't cure the depression, I still had a few more months left of that season, but it was like a witness in the wilderness for me that even in seasons of darkness where I can't perform, I'm not impressive, He's present, He's sustaining and creating a more resilient persevering heart in me.

BS: One of the things I really love about that story is how sustaining the word of God was to you. Very often, we think of the Bible as boring, and it sounds like you kind of approach it with a meditative spirit, which is exactly how you're supposed to approach the Psalms, which kind of dwelling on it and eating of it and savoring it. It seems like that was a big part of, like you said, that sustaining getting you through that tough time. I love it. The book is called The Secret Place of Thunder by John Starke. If you're going through a tough time, I want to recommend you get this book. John, thank you so much. We appreciate you and thanks for this great book.

JS: Thank you.

DECLARATION – Bobby Schuller

Would you stand with me? We're going to hold our hands out like this and we're going to say this together: I'm not what I do. I'm not what I have. I'm not what people say about me.

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I am the beloved of God. That'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 my neighbor. Thanks, you can be seated.

MESSAGE / PRAYER – Bobby Schuller – “Old Men Will Dream Dreams, Old Women Will Laugh”

I want to plead with you today to make a decision to follow Jesus Christ. It's the best decision you can make in your life. How long will it be before your life is at peace with God. It's a big question because I think a lot of people, maybe you say I used to be an atheist and then I went to Yosemite and now I'm an agnostic. Hey, you know, that's a good move in the right direction. And maybe you felt something or you heard something and you went from agnostic to theist – I think there's a God, I think there's something up there. And maybe recently you went from theist to Christian – I like this Jesus guy. I like these principles. This seems like a good way to live my life. No matter where you are, none of those things are enough. Here's what's enough – to know the Lord personally and to be at peace with God. To have the Holy Spirit enter your life. And I want to encourage you today to make a decision to follow Christ and your life will never be the same again. Make that decision. Do it today, and if you do, text me the word HOPE to the number on the screen. We want to pray for you and send you some materials to help in your walk with God. Our team laughed when I told them the title of our sermon this morning. The title of our sermon is “Old Men will Dream Dreams, Old Women will Laugh.” It's based on Genesis chapter 18 through 21. Hannah read the scripture this morning, but I'll go through it quickly. It's four chapters. It begins like this. Abram is 75 years old. Has no children. Wealthy guy, successful, but is worried because this legacy, this bloodline that he's carried on for so long will die out, and he'll have no one to leave his stuff to and his land to or whatever it is he has. He says he's going to have to leave it to his servant or to a friend. And the Lord says to him, Abram, I'm going to give you a son and this son is going to be the beginning of a posterity that's going to outnumber the sands on the seashore and the stars in the sky. Woah. And Abraham believes God. Twenty-five years go by for this 75-year-old man to receive the promise. Everybody say 25 years. (AUDIENCE RESPONDS – twenty-five years) Now that's a long time to wait. Not for God, but for us it is. Twenty-five years go by and God is walking by Abram's tent, Abraham now, and He visits and He says Abraham, a year from next year this time, you're going to have a son. Sarah's going to give birth to a boy, a baby boy. Sarah, meanwhile, because she served the food and she's preparing, is hiding behind the tent and what does Sarah do? She (AUDIENCE RESPONDS – laughs) laughs, that's right. We've got some scholars in the house. Sarah laughs, and God says to her why did you laugh? Is anything impossible for God? And Sarah says I didn't laugh, and God says yes, you laughed. It literally says that in the Bible. Some time goes by. Abraham and Sarah travel around. They're in the land of Abimelech, the king of Gerar, and while they're there, as they're leaving, Gerar blesses them with a thousand shekels of silver and Abraham prays for Abimelech and his wives that they would be healed. Healed of what? That none of them could have children. So Abraham prays for Abimelech, he is healed and Abimelech and his wives are able to have children. And the very next verse after this is over, Sarah becomes pregnant. She gives birth to a baby. She makes a joke about a 90-year-old woman nursing a baby, which is funny in Hebrew, and she laughs. She laughs, and she says wow, God has brought me this child. And she names the baby Yitzhak – Isaac, which in Hebrew means “he laughs.” Appropriate, huh? Here's the first thing I notice from these chapters. There are two types of laughing. There's negative laughing and there's positive laughing. Here's what negative laughing looks like. Negative laughing is like when Jesus goes into a room with a 12-year-old dead girl, and they're mourning, and Jesus says she's not dead, she's sleeping, and everybody (AUDIENCE – laughs) everybody laughs; they mock. And Sarah, the first time she hears that a 90-year-old woman is going to nurse a baby that she delivered, she laughs. This is negative laughing and we've all had it. This is not the laughing of belief, this is the laughing that says I've waited so long, I've wanted so much, my heart is broken. She laughs, she mocks. This is a broken-hearted laugh, and many of us have been there before. But here's what a positive laugh is like. When Jesus reaches down to that 12-year-old girl and picks her up and air comes into her lungs and she stands up, the 12 disciples and her parents, what do they do? They laugh. Wow! She's alive! They cry. And when David chops off the head of Goliath and the Philistine army runs away, what do the Israelites do? They laugh. And what does Sarah do when this dream that she's had for so long becomes a real reality, when she holds this baby in her arms, when she sees that the promise after so long came to be, what does she do? She laughs, and in Hebrew, by the way, this is same word for “rejoice.” She's full of joy.

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What I want to talk about today are these two types of laughs. Maybe you're in that place of negative laughter. You're in that place of mocking. You're in that place of disbelief. You're in that place of broken heartedness. You're in that place of let downs and unfinished symphonies, and you wish your life, your job, your family was better, somehow. And so maybe you got a promise from the Bible or a promise from someone else, and you laughed at it, you mocked it, you cast it down, even though it's for you. Here's how we go from that kind of laughing to the laughing of victory, the laughing of rejoice, the laughing of celebration and we're going to talk about it today. First, notice that when Abraham, a 75-year-old man is told by God that he'll have a child with his 65-year-old wife, Abraham simply believes. Abraham believes it is possible for God to do anything. Now his wife Sarah is 65. She just, she just, she just qualified for Medicare! And now they're going to wait another 25 years. That's a long time. But Abraham believes. Abraham believes its possible. This is what we need to believe that all things are possible for God. You don't have to believe all things are possible for you, but you do, I'm asking you to believe that all things are possible for the God who lives inside of you. I'm asking you to believe in the God who believes in you. I'm asking you to believe in the dreams that God has put in your heart and your mind, and to cast out the doubt, that especially you've put upon yourself, to believe it's possible. So here's a first thing we learn from this passage: become a possibility thinker. That is the first step to faith. Dr. Schuller said to me once, he said in the world of Christianity and ministers, some sow the seed. He said some tend to the crops and others gather the harvest. And he said but I am called to till the soil. I'm called to the ones who have become rock hard, who have become ice cold, who cannot receive the word of God. I've come to till that soil and soften them up for the word of God so the sower can come and plant it. That's what possibility thinking does for our life of faith. It's the first step to a faith. Its saying maybe it's not probable, but it is possible. It is possible. Is it possible for you? And the answer is yes. And possibility thinking is the thing that will open up your life to the new miracles that God has for you this year and today. Did you know your thoughts create your future? The size of your life is limited to the size of your thinking. When you think bigger, your life becomes bigger. When you think smaller, your life becomes smaller. When you believe things are possible for you, the whole world opens up for you. Is it possible to be a homeless girl and go to Harvard? Liz Murray seems to think so. When she was just a kid, she had two parents who were drug addicted. She tells a story about how the government check would come in at the beginning of the month. They'd go down to the mailbox and pick it up. And then immediately they would go and buy drugs and within three days all the money that was meant for food and clothes and shelter, it was spent on drugs. Her dad moved away, her mom got AIDS, and eventually living homeless with these two parents, her mother died and she was all alone as a young teenager. She hadn't gone to school at all. She had holes in her clothes and lice in her hair, could barely read, but she could read, and she asked herself this question: would it be possible for me to go back to school. What if I started reading. What if I worked on it. What if I worked on me. Could I go back to school? Was it possible for her? The answer is yes. And when she was in school, she said what it was possible for me to graduate at the top of my class, even though I've had all these setbacks and all these difficulties. And was it possible for her? It was. She graduated at the top of her class. And as she was getting close to that, she asked the question: would it be possible for me to go to the most prestigious university in the world, Harvard University? And it was. She went. Liz, in telling her story, says here's the thing that got me through it was falling in love with possibility. Just asking that question would it even be possible? Maybe it's just one percent or two percent. Is it possible? It was for her, and it is for you. All things are possible for God in you. All things are possible if God says it's so, and He does. Here's what we need to do – agree with God about you. God says great things about you. God has big dreams for you. God has a list of things that your life could be, and it's up to you whether or not you'll live up to those things. Agree with God. Say to Him you'll be willing to pay the price. Say to Him you're willing to do the work. Say to Him you're willing to commit all that you are, and believe in the big dream that He has for you. Here's something Dr. Schuller taught us – build your dream and your dream will build you. This is something we can learn about dreams. Dreams build people. Oh boy, do they. A dreamless life is a life of despair, but a dream full of goals and vision, a life full of goals and dreams and vision is one that is built up. Here's a better way of saying it – big dreams build big people. If you have a big dream in your heart, here's something that you already know. You have to become a bigger person to achieve that dream. Every day it calls from you in the morning and the evening to become a bigger person to reach the place that God wants you to be. There was once a time in my life I had small dreams. I had not a lot of big things going on. I had small dreams and these small dreams led to a small life.

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And my small dreams led to small experiences. And a small bank account. Small pain, that's true, but small victories. Small fear, but small triumphs. A small network, small skills, a small life resulting from small dreams and small goals. One day I was sitting with Dr. Schuller in his tower, and he asked me the question. He said do you have dreams? And I said yes, I have dreams. He said are you worried that you'll achieve your dreams or do you feel confident that you'll reach them. I said I'm not worried about reaching my dreams. I'll reach them and he said to me – that's the problem! That's the problem! If you're not scared about not reaching your dreams, if you're not a little scared, a little nervous, if you don't feel a little worried, it's not big enough. It needs to be big. This is a God-sized dream. God sized dreams create God sized lives. Like there it is again. And that's what happened for me. I got bigger dreams and my life got bigger. I got bigger dreams and they decided I was going to become a bigger man for bigger goals and that's what happened to me. Get bigger. Get bigger. Some of you say Bobby, I'm getting bigger, trust me. I'm getting bigger. No, not that kind of bigger. I mean you can, I like you just the way you are. But get bigger than your job. Stop complaining about your job. Get bigger than your job. Get bigger than your money problem. Get bigger than your toxic relatives. Get bigger than your insecurities. Get bigger than your temptations. Get bigger than your past. Get bigger. Here's how you get bigger – you get bigger by having a bigger dream, and by committing all that you have and all that you are to that dream. Here's what your dream will ask of you. They will ask this of all of us. Your dream will ask you can you outlast those other souls who had a similar dream. Can you out train them? Can you out work them? Can you out try them? Can you out trust them? I think you can. I think you're willing. I think you will. Reinhard Bonnke was a guy I used to follow back in the day when I was in high school. I was a missionary and I loved to travel around the world and preach the gospel with a group of people, and we would also do humanitarian work, glasses, bringing insulin and medical aid. Reinhard Bonnke was this amazing man, a German guy, traveled the world, and it said that in his lifetime, he died, I think, only a few years ago, in his lifetime over 79 million people, mostly in Africa, converted to Christianity because of him. That's a big life from a big dream. The Nigerian president, when he died, who was a Muslim, said of Reinhard Bonnke this is one of the worst, our hardest days for Nigeria. What a testimony. Reinhard Bonnke, one day, tells a story that he was praying, and he says Lord, thank you for calling me to this great dream, to this big life, to this big calling. And he said he felt that the Holy Spirit said to him, I didn't call you. I called four other people first, but none of them would go the distance. None of them would say yes with all their heart. None of them would commit. You're the first to really say yes. Will you say yes to God when He comes knocking on your door? When you get that dream or that vision, will you say yes to Him? And will you outlast? Will you be worthy of the dream and the goal that God has put upon your life? Or will you reach for comfort. Will you reach for the fog. Fix your autopilot. All of us have autopilots that we're on. Sometimes it's our whole life is autopilot. Some of us autopilot to McDonald's every week. Hey, it's okay to go to McDonalds every once in a while. I like a McFlurry as much as the next guy, but not on autopilot. People say oh I'll just give a little here, give a little there, don't be so naïve. If you give enough that it becomes autopilot, your life will go in a direction you don't want it to go. It won't make you happy, it won't make you peaceful. If you start lying a little bit, you'll have to start lying a lot. Just yesterday I was in a grocery store. Young, beautiful woman with her presumably boyfriend was on the phone, they were walking around, I think buying some booze. She says, on the phone, she says 'John and I are at John's house right now. We're going to leave in ten minutes.' Now notice that. She's become so comfortable with lying she doesn't even understand that her boyfriend is hearing everything that she's saying. What if someday that boyfriend proposes to her? What if someday they stand before an altar and before the Lord and she says to him 'I promise.' You think John can believe it? Not when things get tough. And this is the way that the little things that we let into our life that we know aren't good, they creep and creep and creep and grow. A little bit of yeast leavens the whole loaf. Change your life. Change your thoughts. Change your habits. Stop malingering. You know what malingering is? In the first World War, it was such a harsh and horrible environment, and you can certainly understand the mindset. It's the first time we really understood this thing that at the time was called shell shock. Men would be blasted away by machine guns and gas and die horrible deaths. And in that environment, many of these young men would shoot themselves in the foot or in the leg or in the hand. Why? They just wanted to go home. They'd pretend they were shot by the enemy, but they shot themselves. And even though oftentimes they were caught and put in prison and all of these things, they believed that leaving the fight was the best thing to do. Maybe it was, but in life, we spiritually mangle. When life gets hard and life gets difficult, we shoot ourselves in the foot and we blame someone else.

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Man says I could have built a great business if I didn't have these kids. Malingering. The man with his kids still goes home and watches four hours of TV or three hours of YouTube. Woman says it's my husband's fault. Man says it's the government's fault. This is malingering. It's a way of blaming someone else, it's a way of shooting yourself in the foot to get yourself out of the fight. The fight is exactly where you need to be. You have all that you need to win the fight and to stay in the fight. Don't let your dream just stay a dream. Now we talk about possibility thinking, it becomes possible. That possibility thinking begins to churn up dreams, big dreams that make you a bigger person. But don't let that big dream just stay a dream. Make it a goal. Make it something you can measure, something you can picture, something you could write out, something you could describe. Here's something that Earl Nightingale taught us. If you ask a captain where he is going, he will tell you without a doubt the port of call. He will tell you without blinking where he is going. Can you? Even though ninety-nine percent of the time for the captain the destination is invisible, he has without a doubt exactly where he is going and a good estimate of what it will take to get there and when he'll arrive. He has very little doubt. Captain your life. Captain your life. No one will captain your life for you. No one will take over that wheel and steer your life in the direction it needs to go. Only you can captain your life. No one is coming to sit at the head of your life and if they did, you would resent them. I know because your mother has tried. Your friend has tried. Your father has tried. Your friends have tried. You resent them and you ought to because you have everything within you to run the ship yourself, and to bring it to the place it's called to be. You can do it. Captain your life. If you took a hundred thousand boats and dropped them in the middle of the sea, and hoped that they'd all get to their destination, how many would arrive? Let's all say it together. The number I'm looking for is zero. That's right. That's right, zero. Maybe one, maybe two get lucky and randomly float into harbor without a captain or a crew. You see that sometimes in life. But overwhelmingly a ship must have a captain. You are the captain of your life. All right, that's point one. I better speed up. I only got four minutes left. Here's the second thing we learn from this story. Abimelech. Abimelech the great king can't have children. This is the last thing that happens, and so what does Abraham do? He prays for him and the king is healed and can now have children. And then right after that, Sarah becomes pregnant. Here's a clue, my friends. Here's one of the best ways you can open up your life to miracles: help someone or pray for someone who has what you want. Help someone or pray for someone who wants what you want. This will open up your life. Something spiritually happens, by the way, when this happens in your life. When you pray for someone that has what you want, or pray for someone that wants what you want, something spiritually in your life opens. It's like if your heart was a fist, it goes from a clenched fist to an open hand both to give and to receive and that's what will happen with your life if you begin to pray for people who have or want what you want. When your goal and your dream is about helping others, it becomes a better and more achievable goal. You can build a team around it. You can get up in the morning. And when achieving those goals is about not just you but other people, it makes it easier to make the sacrifice. Here's an interesting statistic. Did you know married men overwhelmingly make more money than single men? And married men with children make more money than married men without children. And actually, proportionally, and the caveat here is they have to stay married, the more children they have, the more money they make. We have a couple in this church, the guys dad, he works for his dad, owns a business, his dad said I'll give you a raise every time you have a child. Guess how many kids they have. Thirteen. Thirteen kids. And he makes a good living, I assume. Why is that? Why is it that married men with children make more money and the answer is if the reason you're trying to make money is for a Ferrari or for a big house for you, or to show off, when things get tough, you won't get through. That's not enough to wake you up in the morning. You know what's enough to wake you up in the morning? A crying baby. A wife who says hey, we need a bigger house. If you have a dream in your heart and others need you to accomplish your dream, it's a winner. If you can imagine your business, your dream, your product, your ministry, and other people need it, and it's not met, it is a winner. It will make a difference. The more your dream is aligned with the service of others, the more likely it is to come about. This is absolutely true. You ask Jesus, hey Jesus, I want to be the greatest woman or the greatest man who's ever lived. I want to be the greatest person who's ever lived, what will Jesus say to you? Here's what He won't say to you. He won't rebuke you. He won't say how dare you ask that question. He won't say get out of here. This is what He'll say to you – if you want to be the greatest person who's ever lived, learn how to serve and learn how to serve as many people as you can and the greatness of your life will be equal to the depth and breadth of your service. You want to be a great person? Align your goal with the service of others. Can we just say it this way – deliver.

Old Men Will Dream Dreams, Old Women Will Laugh

Deliver. Be the man. Be the woman. Be the Christian you vowed you would be. In your baptism, you made a promise to God about who you would be, and you made a promise to yourself about what your life would be like, and what choices you would make, and where you would be. Did you mean it? Did you really mean it? In your marriage, you stood across from the man or a woman and you made a promise to them and to yourself about who you would be. Did you mean it? When you signed up for your job and you were all excited and enthusiastic to be there, you made a promise to your employer about what kind of a person you would be. Did you mean it? A man says well you don't know my boss, you don't know my colleagues, you don't know my product. I know that if you made a promise to yourself and you broke it, you sure don't feel good about it. That's what I know. You made a promise when you looked in a mirror one day, and you promised who you'd become and where you'd go and what you'd have achieved. You're still alive. Those promises can still be fulfilled. When you looked in the mirror and you said those things to yourself, did you mean it? I made a vow to God years ago, about twenty years ago, I started noticing many young pastors were getting into things like drugs and losing their faith or just getting weird, and I just cried out to God in my disappointment with my peers – God, I will never turn my back on you. That was a tattoo on my heart. It still remains there today and it drives me every day I live. When I stood before a beautiful young woman named Hannah Presley, I said I will love you and no other the rest of my life. That was a vow and I meant it and I've kept it. When my daughter Haven was born on December 14th, it's amazing when a first child is born, two things are made. Actually, three things are made. When a first child is born, a child is made, but a mother is made for the first time, and a father is made for the first time. And that day, when I became a father, I looked at my child and I said I vow to be your dad, and that meant a lot to me, I've kept it. I've kept it for my kid. Look – you didn't choose God. God chose you. You didn't choose the dream; the dream was appointed to you. Here's what you can choose – you can choose to turn your back on God, and you can choose to turn your back on your dream. Don't do it. Be worthy of the calling. Be worthy of the choice. Show that God was right when He pointed at you and He said this one. You're worthy of it. You can do it. Agree with God about you and about your future. Here's something else we can understand about life and about the people we love, and it's one of the sad things about life. Love has a currency, like the currency. Freedom is the currency of love. I try to bring this up as much as I can, but this is something we have to understand – the more love you have in your life, the less freedom you have. The more freedom you have in your life, the less love you have and this is just how it is. We need freedom to love people, we need freedom to love people. In fact, this is why it's so important in the United States that we emphasize freedom is because we love people. If you look at countries that don't have a lot of freedom, they also don't have a lot of love. You'll see that. Not a lot of compassion, not a lot of laughter. But let me say this – demand freedom from your country, demand freedom from your government, demand freedom from your job, but not from your friends and your family. You've traded freedom for love and that's good. Man blames his kids, his wife, a woman blames her children or all the people that love her or him, let that go. You have enough power, you have the ability, you have enough freedom to accomplish your dreams and have love in your life. Maybe you lost a little bit of freedom, let me tell you, love is better. Some of the people you love, your parents, maybe your siblings, maybe they require a lot of your free time. Someday they'll be gone and you'll wish you had less freedom and more of their love in your life. Isn't it the truth? So love everybody. Don't resent people. All right finally, the last point, story sort of wraps up. Genesis chapter 21:6, Sarah says "God has brought me laughter," which is literally Isaac's name, "and everyone who hears about this will laugh with me." Here's the last thing I want to say to you and never forget this – your victory isn't just for you. It is for you, but it's for everybody else, too. Everybody else is watching you. Your friends, your family, your enemies, they're watching you. They're watching you. You're blessed to be a blessing. That's what was said of Israel. God said of Israel you will be blessed, but also you're blessed in order that you can be a blessing. So this is what Max Lucado taught us, right? That your test will become your testimony. Never forget this journey that there are a lot more eyeballs that are watching than you know. It's for them, too. Your test will be your testimony. Your mess will be your message. Your success will be your sermon and your miracle will be your ministry. We thank you, Lord, that your presence is here. We ask that you would give us a clear vision of a bigger dream for our lives, and we pray that we'd become big enough to achieve those dreams. Lord, we thank you that you love us, that you believe in us, that you called us, and we thank you, it's in Jesus' name, amen.