

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

BAN:
DE43600501010002894829

BIC:
SOLADEST600

Büro Schweiz:

Hour of Power Schweiz
Seest. 8
3594 Güttingen
Tel.: 071 690 07 81
info@hourofpower-schweiz.ch
www.hourofpower-schweiz.ch

Spendenkonto:

PostFinance AG, 3030 Bern
Konto: 61-18359-6
BAN:
CH1609000000610183596

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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.

HS: Welcome church family. And as Grandpa Schuller used to say, "Today's accomplishments were yesterday's impossibilities." You are far stronger and far more capable than you know, and God has called you to live life to the full, so may we honor Him with that.

BS: Amen. We're so glad you're here. And whatever you're bringing, we're going to relax today, we're going to just give it to the Lord and we're going to trust this week to Him.

So let's begin there: Father, we love you. Father, we thank you that you've called us into your house, that you love us just as we are, not as we should be. That you just have grace upon grace for us. That you love mercy over sacrifice. Lord, we thank you, God, that you call us your children and that you want to reveal things to us and help us learn and grow and to be more like Jesus. Lord, we're so thankful for you and we love you, it's in Jesus' name we pray, amen.

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

SCRIPTURE – Matthew 11:25-29 – Hannah Schuller

In preparation for Bobby's message, the words of our Lord found in Matthew 11:25. And I'm going to be reading out of The Message Bible today, The Message translation. We typically read out of the NIV.

Abruptly Jesus broke into prayer. Thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth. You concealed your ways from sophistates and know-it-als, but spelled them out clearly to ordinary people. Yes, Father, that's the way you like to work. Jesus resumed talked to the people but now tenderly. The Father has given me all these things to do and say. This is a unique Father/Son operation. Coming out of the Father and Son intimacies and knowledge. No one knows the Son the way the Father does, nor the Father the way the Son does. But I'm not keeping it to myself. I'm ready to go over it line by line with anyone willing to listen. Are you tired, worn out, burned out on religion? Come to me. Get away with me and you'll recover your life. I'll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me and work with me. Watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won't lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me and you'll learn to live freely and lightly. You, child of God, are never alone because you are yoked to Jesus. Amen.

INTERVIEW – TRINITEE STOKES

BS: What a joy to have Trinitee Stokes with us as our guest. She's an actress known for her role as Judy on the Disney Channel Show KC Undercover. Trinitee is also a singer, a fashion designer and an author who's just released her first book, *Bold and Blessed: How to stay true to yourself and stand out from the crowd*. Would you please welcome with me Trinitee Stokes. Hi Trinitee!

TS: Hey!

BS: Wow. You wouldn't guess it. You're so like mature for your age. I just mentioned it earlier, you're kind of an old soul in many ways you seem so wise. How old do you think Trinitee is? She's 12! She's 12-years-old. And that's something that I think is so impressive you have an awesome story and you wrote a book, which is crazy because when I was 12, I was worried about video games and a one page paper I had to write. And what are you, 8th grade maybe?

TS: Yes. I'm still working on papers. I have one due on Monday.

BS: That's great. So what was it like as a 12-year-old to write a book?

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TS: It was something that was super exciting. I've always wanted to be an author and Bold and Blessed is kind of just a compilation of all the experiences that I've gone through in my short 12 years, and all the different things that I've learned, so I was super excited to write Bold and Blessed.

BS: You know I find that for a lot of authors, when they write a book, there's kind of like it's been inside them for awhile, and so when they write a book, sometimes it's not easy, but there's kind of an excitement about getting it on paper, seeing it, being able to share it with somebody. Did you feel that way when you wrote this book?

TS: Oh definitely. Like the very first copy that I had of Bold and Blessed with the pictures and all the different facets in Bold and Blessed, I was so excited I couldn't wait to tell my family and my friends because this project that I had been working on for all this time was finally out and I was like yes!

BS: Yes, that's awesome. So what was like then, I mean like you're not from LA, right? This is kind of an amazing story. You and your family, you all have a deep and rich faith in the Lord, and they're here today, I know, and here encouraging you, but you aren't originally from LA, right?

TS: Right. I definitely think that our faith has definitely been so influential in our journey because you're correct, we moved from Mississippi to California, so our faith was there with us when we made that long cross country journey, and then it took a little while for the promise that the Lord gave us to come true, but we held onto our faith and it came to pass, we stuck through it and now our faith is still with us today.

BS: So you really feel like God gave your family a word – leave Mississippi, go to California, something like that.

TS: Yes, when I was three, I said hey mom, I was watching TV, I was like hey, I want to do that. I want to make people laugh. So when I was five, I did my very first commercial and it's been uphill from there. The Lord gave our family a word to move to California to pursue my acting career, and that's what we did, and here we are now!

BS: That's awesome. I love how you say uphill like it's a good thing.

TS: Yes.

BS: It's like it's a lot of work, but it's leading to somewhere great, and that's been your story.

TS: It's definitely been a hill. We've had to climb a little way, but it's definitely been worth it, for sure.

BS: What was it like the first time you went into KC Underground and it's this big set, and here, you're a kid, and like this is your dream come true. What was that like for you?

TS: I was super, super nervous. The very first day that I went on set, I was like oh my Lord, this is the thing that I've dreamed of and that our family has worked so hard to achieve, and now that I'm here, I was like oh my god, this is so happening to me right now!

BS: It's awesome because you really do love the Lord. You've even preached a sermon, right?

TS: Yes, this is true.

BS: We should have you come preach sometime, Reverend Stokes!

TS: Call me!

BS: I will call you. All right. It's on camera.

TS: Hey I get a phone for my 13th birthday, so call me.

BS: All right I will, Trinitee. So as a preacher and as a person of faith, is it hard sometimes to be in a place like LA that may not always share your world view, your faith, your values, things like that.

TS: Yes. It is definitely, definitely super duper tricky because sometimes when I'm out and about and people asking my opinion on things, I give the Jesus view. I tell them how I feel through my eyes of being a Christian and sometimes I get ridiculed and things like that, and oftentimes I do have to turn down roles because they don't necessarily agree with my faith. And that's something that it was a little hard at first, but then I was like no, I have to stick to my faith because my faith has brought me this far, and it's allowed me to have the opportunity to turn down roles, so I always have to stay true to that.

BS: That's good, Trinitee. It's so, so awesome, and I just believe God's going to honor that and so proud of you. Well and in a way, that sort of led to your message. I feel like there's a lot of people that talk about being different, but in a way, they're just kind of like everybody else in the way that they act, the way they behave, the way they think, and so for you, it takes a lot of courage sometimes to not only look different than everybody else in the way you design and do these things, but the way you live your life and the way you make certain decisions that, I mean a worldly point of view may not always benefit you. But in the spiritual point of view, they do, they benefit you and your family.

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TS: Yes, that's..

BS: Tell me about that.

TS: ..that's definitely true and that's what inspired me to write Bold and Blessed because when I'm out, I definitely see a lot of people who are trying to conform and do the things that the world are doing, or things that are popular on social media, or what's trending, so in Bold and Blessed I kind of wanted to encourage people of all ages to say hey, I'm unique, I'm different, I'm bold and whatever the Lord gave me that makes me stand out from the crowd, I'm going to accept that and use it to my advantage.

BS: That's awesome. I love it. And just one last question, do you think, I mean you're 12, do you think adults will enjoy reading this book?

TS: Definitely. There's something in Bold and Blessed for everybody whether it's down to my tips on hair and makeup, or anything like from the way I like to cook with my dad, or your self-worth and self-values, so there's definitely something in there for everybody.

BS: That's great. Well anyway, well Trinitee, thank you so much. Check out the book: it's Bold and Blessed: How to stay true to yourself and stand out from the crowd. You've certainly done that, Trinitee, and you've blessed us all here so much. We love you and appreciate you, and we're so proud of you. Thank you for being here.

TS: Thank you.

BS: God bless you.

TS: Thank you.

DECLARATION – Bobby Schuller

Hold your hands out like this as a way of receiving from the Holy Spirit. Let's say this together: I'm not what I do. I'm not what I have. I'm not what people say about me. I am the beloved of God. It's who I am. No one can take it from me. I don't have to worry, I don't have to hurry, I can trust my friend Jesus, and share His love with the world.

Thanks, you can be seated.

MESSAGE – Bobby Schuller - "You Are Not Alone"

Today I'm going to talk about something that's pretty close to my heart, and that is the idea that we all struggle with loneliness. We do, don't we? Anybody here struggle with loneliness? Raise your hand. So those of you who didn't raise your hand are either bored or need it the most.

And that's what I want to talk about today that so much of the bad stuff we do that we don't like to do, so much of our brokenness, so much of our failures in life is not rooted directly to what we think it is. It's not that we lack willpower, it's not that we don't know what's right and wrong, is very often there's inner yearning, a loneliness that drives what we do.

Feeling lonely is a very universal feeling, especially in a changing world where you have so many different cultures, languages. I'll never forget when I lived in Germany for seven months; it was one of the most lonely times of my life. And Germans.. it's not Germany's fault. Germans are Germans, but you know, you have a language problem, you've got a food problem.

We all feel lonely, all of us do because we can feel lonely when we're in subcultures, we can feel lonely if we are expatriates or whatever, anyway. It's interesting because when you take a child, for example, and you discipline them, one of the most common ways to discipline a child is to give them, what: a time out! You put them in the room, no toys, they have to be all alone, and kids go crazy. They hate it because they're human beings. In prisons when a prisoner is out of line, one of the harshest punishments you can give a person is called solitary confinement where they just have to be alone for days.

And this is something that is so unique about being human is that we need one another. That we give and receive of love. That we share in each other's stories. That we're not alone! And that's my message to you today is I want you to know you're not alone. You have friends, you have family, you're a little weird, but you're not that weird. You're weird like the rest of us, and you're not rejectable that you have something that people want, but most of all, you have the Lord in your life.

And very often that sounds like a cop out for lonely people. Well, I want a God with some skin on Him. And I want you to know that in truth, this is the solution. That when we find the Lord in our solitude, in our solitary confinement, then we're able to find one another when we're with people.

See that's part of it. A lot of us have plenty of people in our lives. Sometimes we're saturated with people, but we still feel lonely. You ever feel that way?

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You're at a party, you know everybody there, everything's great, everybody's having a good time, and for some reason, you almost feel more lonely being around people. And there's a reason for that. And the reason is this: that we need to not just be with people, we need to be truly seen, to be truly known, and just as we are, to still be loved. We've said very many times that aside from the obvious things like food, water and shelter, the greatest human need is to bond deeply with others. Another way of saying that is the greatest human need is to be seen and to be loved. Most of us, we have to learn this, that very often, we do things to ourselves to make us more attractive to others: we shower, some of us, we clip our toenails and we get our hair did and we learn things, we become funny, we become interesting, we do things to stand out, and these are all lovely things, and keep doing those things, by the way.

But very often when your personality becomes so enthusiastic and so attractive and so alluring, it's easy to wonder, well do they know me? Do they really know me or do they know this performance that I'm giving them? You can especially feel that in a place like work where you're performing and you're delivering projects, and you're winning, but do they really know me? Do these people really like me? Am I really a friend to them?

And you might even have some sort of unconscious feelings like if they knew this about me, how embarrassing would that be? If they knew this about me, wouldn't they shut me out of their lives?

And so many of us, we have these types of things in our life. Maybe it's something from your past, something you did to someone, something that was done to you.

For some of us, maybe it's something that you're currently struggling with: an addiction, maybe you're struggling with depression and anxiety, which is very common. You don't want people to know about that.

All of us, we have these things about ourselves that are not our ideal. We know what is right, we know what is wrong. We know what is good, we know what is evil. We think I just need to hunker down and try harder and become the person that people see in me. And so until I reach that point, I have to pretend; pretend to be that person. And that's not the way. That's the world's way; it's not God's way. It seems like God's way, it's not. God says to you, come to me just as you are. Just as you are: broken, beat up, doubting, ragged, hurting, frustrated, and I will give you rest for your soul. I will yoke you to my life. I will give you freedom, joy, and the things that you truly need.

So what happens is if we don't come to the Lord first in our loneliness, we try and force others to meet that need when they really can't the way that we need them to. We become controlling, for some of us. I know I've done this a lot, become a controlling person. I had a friend in college that said my mom is so weird. She is so demanding that all of us, all the kids and family, that everybody's always around, and then when we're all there, she just stays busy and doesn't talk to any of us. Anybody act that way? Got any mom's here? No I mean, I think I've been that way before. I need people around and then when they're around, I shut them out. And this is a classic human thing to do, that in our loneliness, we want people around, we want noise, we want busyness, for some of us. For others of us, when we're around others and we don't have that need met, very often we withdraw. That's when we withdraw to our addictions. It's not always bad stuff, though. Maybe we withdraw into hobbies or things like that, but even then our need isn't met and we're simply finding an anesthetic to deal with this sort of deeper chronic problem of feeling isolated in this world.

Friend, I want you to know that just as you are, you are lovable, and that part of living out as a disciple of Jesus is taking off the mask with the people that matter most in your life: your friends and your family. Allowing them to see some of the parts of your life that you're embarrassed about and being okay with the fact if they reject you when you show them that, but also trusting that some of them will draw even closer to you. It's easier said than done, isn't it, especially if you've done it before and have been hurt. Easier said than done. And that's why we can't just do it by doing it. We can't just do it through willpower, we can't just do it by trying harder. The solution is not direction, its indirection. In other words, the solution is not just taking off the mask, but drawing closer to the Lord with our life, and bonding with Him so that we can feel stronger on the inside when we take our mask off.

In other words, the solution to all of this is the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. That when you're feeling lonely, when you're feeling isolated, when you're feeling in despair, that sometimes one of the best things we can do instead of jumping into entertainment, or more friends, or busyness with work, sometimes we need to lean into the kingdom of God. We need to go into solitude and silence. Just as St. Anthony ran from Egypt into the desert, we need to go exactly into what we think it is that is causing our problems. We need to lean into the knife, as it were. We need to lean into our loneliness and allow and trust the Holy Spirit will meet us there.

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A little bit more on that later, but first our scripture reading today is Matthew chapter 11, one of the most popular scriptures, and for a reason. Jesus is preaching and He's really angry. He's frustrated because He's done all of these amazing miracles in these cities, incredible things have been performed, and people just wrote it off or they just got busy with life, maybe they were impressed but they didn't repent or change or turn their hearts or follow Him. And so all of this amazing stuff has happened and He's going on and on and just is so frustrated, and even cursing these cities.

And then He catches Himself and He says, "I praise you Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you've hidden these things from the wise and the learned." Listen to that – God hides it from those who are wise and learned. He intentionally hides it from them. "You've hidden these things from the wise and learned" and then He intentionally reveals it to others. Who does He reveal it to? He reveals it to little children. "Yes, Father, for this is what you are pleased to do" almost like God thinks it's funny, like it's fun to take the smartest people in the world and hide these things from them in their pride, and reveal it to simple folk; to ordinary people. Not just children but it's a way of saying to reveal it to people that are humble and innocent and just want to learn.

You ever know anybody that's really wise and really learned and yet kind of dumb? I've been that person.

If you spend enough time at universities and places of research or scientific communities, you're going to find a lot of big egos, and in those egos you're going to find themselves wrapped up in their IQ or in their research or in whatever, their clout, the size of their classroom, the amount that they've published. And their cup is full. They don't need any advice from you. They don't need any input from anyone, they know it all, literally. And we know those people. I have been that person where your cup is so full it can't receive any more tea, as the old Zen proverb goes. Right? There's no room left to learn.

And very often, we become this way, especially as we achieve and do more and learn more and read more. We can get to a place where we feel as though we have figured it all out. And when we see a miracle, as those in Capernaum did, you go that doesn't fit. That doesn't fit what I've learned. And I know that in my own life, I have had a hard heartedness because of the pride of life, because of ego, because of my religiosity where God was clearly doing something in someone's life that He wasn't supposed to do something in their life. God was doing something unique in my church but those types of things don't happen anymore. God was doing something in my family, but that guy, he's a sinner, there's no way God would do something in his life.

And there's times where there's something about some way that we view the world, a lens where it won't allow us to see the kingdom of God right in front of us. That we've had a hardened heart. Why do you think we get hard hearts? Why do you think? Do you think God really does hide these things from the wise and learned? Do you think He does it as a trick? Do you think the Lord hardens our hearts because He's unkind and unfair towards us?

When I think about the phrase "hardened heart" in the Bible, I very much think of Pharaoh and the story in Exodus where God is telling them to let my people go, and Pharaoh's heart is hardened, and it actually says that "the Lord hardens Pharaoh's heart." And this is very hard for a lot of people, theologically, because if God wants Pharaoh to release the people but is hardening Pharaoh's heart, doesn't that seem unjust, in a way, unfair, doesn't that seem not right?

Let's look at that story very briefly, just as a planned side tangent. Pharaoh, in the Old Testament, is one of many, many villains, and he's by the far the worst. When the Hebrew Bible begins, it shows that out of Eden comes evil people, and out of evil, murder, and a struggle for power emerges this thing empire, evil empire, just like in Star Wars, right? You've got these giant vast groups of armies, states, etc., that are usually led by one dictator and it's their way or the highway, and all of these kings, leaders, despotes, they've all been evil, and finally you reach the worst of them all now, and it's Pharaoh.

And Pharaoh's made a slave of the Hebrew people, they're building his pyramids, etc., and God obviously calls Moses, we know, because of Charlton Heston, to let my people go. And as Pharaoh says no, God will send one curse after another against Egypt and there are ten plagues that hit Egypt. And after every plague it says something about Pharaoh's hard heart.

I made a slide for this to show you what happens. You can see that in the first five stories, Pharaoh hardens his own heart or it's sort of passively hardened. So the first one Pharaoh's heart becomes hard. Pharaoh hardens his own heart. Pharaoh's heart was hard. Pharaoh hardened his own heart. Pharaoh's heart was hard. And then finally the sixth one, it's the Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart. Isn't that interesting?

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And then again in the seventh, the hail, Pharaoh hardened his own heart, but then the eighth, God hardened Pharaoh's heart. God hardened Pharaoh's heart. God hardened Pharaoh's heart. I found that interesting. And one of the things that I think is interesting is I actually believe that God loved Pharaoh. Do you believe that? Believed that Pharaoh, in his evil, even though he murdered, tortured, dominated, conquered, enslaved constantly, God was still chasing after Pharaoh to turn, to repent, to be a good king, to do what is right, and you can see that every step of the way that all of these curses that come against Egypt, Pharaoh's response is more hard toward God; more angry towards God till finally he receives God's wrath in the hardening of his own heart.

Have you ever had a hard heart? Maybe you have a hard heart today. You're too smart for this religious stuff. Or you've been hurt by religious people, you can't trust that kind of a thing. I have been there, and like I'm a preacher. What happened?

Why do we harden our hearts? Why does that happen? There's a parable where Jesus talks about the seeds; that the Lord casts these seeds and it just sort of falls everywhere, and some falls on the road, on the hard road, some falls on good soil and some falls among thorns, and some falls among rocks. And we always talk about the last ones, but the ones that's so fascinating to me is the first one, the road.

If you're to go to a farm, and you were to see a dirt road, nobody really made that road. It's just usually some game trail or some path that was walked on so much it became hard and nothing can grow there anymore.

The reason I think so many of our hearts become hard is because we get walked on. We get pressured, we get pushed down, we experience stress, we experience sin, we experience betrayal, we experience a broken heart, and there comes a point for many of us who have become hard hearted, we're so wounded, we're so hurt, we're so isolated, we're so lonely, that we just said enough! I'm going to be strong, I'm going to be tough. I may not be loveable, but at least I'll be respectable. I'll be admirable. And this is very sad. This has happened to me and I know it's probably happened to you. Where there's a time in your life you're so wounded, that you just feel like maybe you've used the word you have to survive.

Maybe you're there now and I want you to know that the Lord hasn't forgotten you and He's calling to you, not as in old man or an old woman or a tough guy or a tough gal or someone who has to tell it like it is, but He's calling to you, He sees a child – an innocent, hurting, broken, maybe sinful, but still a kid, and He wants you to come home to Him.

Why do we harden our hearts? We harden our hearts because we're hurt. We're wounded and that's part of the world that we live in. By the way, this is why, if you're married to a hard hearted person, or friends with a hard hearted person, or work with a hard hearted person, we often think that we got to shoot straight with them and be tough with them and tell it like it is. But hard hearted people need compassion and mercy more than any of us.

Reminds me of Aesop's fable of the wind and sun when they give in the wager, you may remember this story. This, by the way, is a painting done by Usan Ho. It's beautiful. Aesop says in this parable that one day the sun and the wind they made a wager with one another. They saw a man walking along the road who was wearing a beautiful coat and they wanted to see if they could get him to take his coat off. And so they made a wager and the wind went first, and the wind started blowing against the man. And of course right away, trying to blow the jacket off, the man pulls his coat closer. And so the wind says I'm going to send sixty mile an hour winds (this is the Bobby version) blows even harder; sends rains and trying to blow that jacket off. And of course the man hunkers down and he holds his jacket for all of his life.

And finally the wind gives up and says I can't do it. And then the sun says let me go. And the sun parts the clouds, and stops the wind, and it becomes a beautiful day, and he makes it just warm enough where the man starts to sweat, and he takes the jacket off and uses it as a pillow to take a nap under a tree. And this is how the human heart is. This is why revolutions happen is because the more you try and press against people who are anti-fragile, the tougher they get; the more they put up walls, the more they defend themselves, the more entrenched they become. But if we can be more like the sun: slow, slow to anger, gentle, merciful, warm, compassionate, empathetic, you might just see some hard hearted people in your life relax a little bit.

If you're a hard hearted person, as I've been, or maybe you're experiencing some hard heartedness to the Lord, maybe you're not completely closed off, but there's a part of your life that's become hardened to the Father. I'm asking you to soften your heart to Him. You may not be ready to soften your heart to other people yet, but soften your heart to what the word of the Lord might be for you.

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Come to the Lord as you would an innocent child, as though you were an innocent child. Come to the Lord as though you were a kid, not a know it all, not a horrible person, not a mess up or a screw up, just come to Him as a child would come to his father or her father.

Maybe you're here today and you're like I want to soften my heart, but I can't. I can't get myself to soften, to soften up to the Lord. Well just ask Him to soften your heart. The Lord loves those kinds of requests. You ever felt that way? I once had a muscle cramp where I was swimming and it was this incredibly painful. It was in my calf, and it was like my calf was just flexing and wouldn't stop flexing, and it hurt so bad, and there was nothing I could do for quite awhile to get it to just relax. Maybe that's how your heart feels. If you feel that way, just ask the Lord: Lord, would you help me loosen my heart towards you. Would you help me soften myself towards what you want.

Jesus goes on then, so I'm still in the passage, but He says "Praise you, Father in heaven because you haven't revealed these things to the wise and learned, you've hidden them from them and you revealed it to ordinary people. To those who come to you like they are children."

And then He says in verse 28, "Come to me all you who are weary and burdened." Do you feel weary and burdened today? Come to the Lord. "And I will give you rest.

Take my yoke upon you and learn from me for I am gentle and humble in heart and you will find rest for your souls for my yoke is easy and my burden is light."

This expression "yoke" in Jewish culture, well yoke literally is what you have for two oxen. When you bind two oxen together to plow a field, and a yoke was a symbol for the teaching of a rabbi. You almost might consider a denomination. You know every denomination has their different spin on faith, right? Presbyterians believe one thing, and Pentecostals believe another, and Methodists believe another, and we share most of the same stuff, but we differ in certain areas. And in Jesus' day, the yoke of most rabbis was very hard. For religiosity, it was law. It was 613 rules you had to follow in very precise ways. Jesus did away with that and He said yoke yourself to me.

And of course in those days, you would take a very young, enthusiastic kind of teenager ox, and you would always yoke him to an older ox that was calm and relaxed and knew how to plow the field. And that's what Jesus is saying. Yoke your life to me for my yoke is really difficult and its going to chafe your neck and it's going to be horrible, like all those other religions and religious people. No, my yoke is easy. My burden is light. You will find rest for your souls. That is a promise.

With all this talk about loneliness, isolation, hard heartedness, and brokenness in relationships, if you hear anything I'm saying at all, it's this: the solution is not more people. The solution is not more work. The solution is not more events and more things to go to. The solution is less. In a day like today when we're so busy and always in traffic and always watching things and always reading things, there is this ancient wisdom called the via negativa; that the way we approach God is not in a negative way, but we do it in a way in which we're removing things from our life. The same way you would remove shrubbery to carve a path to somewhere you need to go, you are removing the barriers in your life between you and God.

All this to say I think God's calling us in a time of spiritual desperation, spiritual loneliness, to sometimes pursue solitude; solitude and silence. That we actually go to a place where we are only with Jesus and we remove so many of those burdens that come between us and being with the Lord. All right, well just one last bit of advice. I want to encourage you to consider next time you're feeling lonely, next time you're feeling like people don't understand you, or that you're always having to perform, to go somewhere beautiful, somewhere that makes you feel alive, and decide Lord, I'm not going to leave here until you heal my heart. To be like that pestering widow that's knocking at the judge's feet, or the neighbor that's knocking at the other neighbor's door. You say Lord, I'm not going to leave here till you heal my heart. And if you do that, and you go to a place and you give yourself all day, and you leave your Bible at home. I actually learned this from Juan Carlos that sometimes the Bible, as much as we love it, can become something else to do: that you bring the Bible in your heart, but don't bring it in your hand. And just go without anything to do, without your cell phone. You can bring a watch, though, and just be with the Lord.

When I've encouraged people to do this, this is usually the process that happens. The first feeling is anxiety. So it's like I think of all the stuff I got to do. I got errands to do. And all of a sudden you just start remembering all of this stuff you've got to do. Maybe you can write that down on a sheet of paper and set it to the side so you remember later. But its anxiety. Oh, I've got stuff to do, I got places to go, I got people to see.

And then finally, once you chill out from that, it might take awhile, you experience boredom. Oh, this is so boring. You know.

You Are Not Alone

Dear Lord, or Father, who art.. where was I? So you start to feel bored? And then if you're willing to press through the boredom, you then get to sometimes the core issue. You start to feel lonely. I haven't seen anybody in a long time, I haven't been anywhere in a long time. This is a very painful process, by the way. Maybe you won't be able to do it the first time.

And then if you stay in your loneliness, that's really where you begin to pray and seek the Lord: Lord, would you meet me here. Maybe you sing a hymn or really pray the Lord's Prayer, or pray Psalm 23. And then something amazing happens. As Henri Nouwen says, your loneliness turns into solitude and you get a touch from the Holy Spirit. It might take a few times to do it, but the more you do it, the less anxiety, boredom and loneliness you'll have when you go into solitude, and pretty soon you'll be able to train yourself that every time you go alone to be with the Lord, you'll go right into solitude and be full of the spirit.

So I want to encourage you that if you do this, that if you seek the Lord before you seek people, and you seek Him in your loneliness before you try and get other people to feel it, you will then go into your relationships full of love, full of something to give, not needing them to fill something that only God can fill.

Lord, we love you, and we thank you that you've called us here, and that we are not alone. Lord, you love us just as we are, not as we should be. And Lord, I pray for everyone under the sound of my voice who has a hardened heart, who's hurting, who's brokenhearted today, Lord, would you bring healing. Would you show us that we're never alone? That as isolated as we could become, Lord, even there you're with us. Lord, we thank you and we love you, it's in Jesus' name, amen.

BENEDICTION – Bobby Schuller

Thank you for being here today and it's so great you got out of the house and you started your week planted in God's home. I just think that if you make a habit of being here with your family that things go better in life. Well we're so glad you came today.

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.