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

BS: This is the day the Lord has made. Let us rejoice and be glad in it.

HS: Welcome visitors and welcome church family. It is good to be with you. Today, may we not lean on our own understanding, but will we trust God with passionate patience. Thank you so much for being here today. You are so loved.

BS: We're just so grateful you're here, as well, and are really looking forward to spending this morning with you, worshipping with you, and wherever you are on television, we're so glad you're joining us, and online, on Facebook, thank you for being here.

Let's begin with a word of prayer: Father, we thank you and we love you, and we ask in Jesus' name that your Holy Spirit would fill the hearts and minds of everyone under the sound of my voice. Lord, many of us are here searching after you, and we're looking after goals and things like this, and very often we hurt people in our lives or we get hurt, I pray, Father, that your healing power and redemptive work would be obvious in our relationships, in our families. Lord, 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 – Numbers 22:30-32– Hannah Schuller

You may be seated. In preparation for the message, Numbers 22:30:

The donkey said to Balaam am I not your own donkey, which you have always ridden to this day? Have I been in the habit of doing this to you? No, he said. Then the Lord opened Balaam's eyes and he saw the angel of the Lord standing in the road with his sword drawn. So he bowed low and fell face down. The angel of the Lord asked him why have you beaten your donkey these three times? I have come here to oppose you because your path is a reckless one before me.

Church family, we are striving to trust God's plan wholeheartedly, and not to get angry at those trying to help us. Amen.

INTERVIEW – Kayla Stoecklein (KS) – Bobby Schuller (BS)

(VIDEO ROLL IN: Kayla Stoecklein is a mom of three boys, and an inspirational speaker. In August of 2018, her husband Andrew, pastor of Inland Hills Church, died by suicide. She's now an advocate for mental health in churches, and how we can support our community and leaders who suffer with mental illness. No matter your mistakes, no matter your mental health, God's got you, God's got this and God can do impossible things. Amen. Please welcome Kayla Stoecklein.)

BS: Kayla, thank you so much for being here to address something I think is very near and dear to a lot of people's hearts, and that is sort of the sometimes taboo subject of mental health within the church. And you've really gone through a lot, and before we sort of get into the issues the church is facing today, first maybe you can tell us a little bit about your story and kind of what your family went through.

KS: Sure. In August of 2018 my husband Andrew, who was the lead pastor of our church at the time, he had been on an extended sabbatical battling depression and anxiety and we were doing everything we knew to do to get him better. And so in August he went back to work and he hit the ground running and gave two very powerful messages on mental illness. He was using his own story as an example and talking about his own struggles with depression and anxiety. And unfortunately headed into the third week of his message series, Andrew had a really bad day, there was a trigger, and the next day he attempted suicide. And we were all stunned and shocked, and we never saw it coming. This man that was being so vulnerable and transparent about his struggles, we did not think this was ever a possibility. And unfortunately the next day he passed away.

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BS: That had to be an incredible shock. Had he ever made an attempt before that? So it was the first time it had ever happened.

KS: First time. And it was a very fast battle. He started having panic attacks in the fall of 2017, and then passed away in August. It was only 10 months that we had with mental illness.

BS: Oh, so before that, there really wasn't much of a sign at all.

KS: No.

BS: That's interesting. And a big thing for his life, too, I mean like he really was pretty.. you guys were young when you got married, you're young when you got started in ministry, and like his dad passed away, that was probably very traumatic for him, as well, I'm sure.

KS: Yes, so his parents started the church when he was three-years-old, and so his dad was the lead pastor of the church and after we were married for about a year, his dad was diagnosed with leukemia and Andrew was 23 years old, and stepped up to the plate and was helping lead the church. We have pictures of them in the hospital together with their laptops open, planning message series, booking guest speakers, and his dad battled for four years and then he passed away in 2015 and Andrew just kept leading strong and never really took a break to take care of himself.

BS: So just after his dad, and it was four years, and watching his dad degenerate and this just traumatic experience. It's interesting, I didn't understand it was such a brief period of struggling with mental illness. And that's a good reminder to a lot of us is that really nobody is impervious to mental illness at some point in their life with depression and anxiety. That's actually a very normal thing to experience even though it's difficult like cancer or something like that. It's common but dangerous.

Anyway, how did your family and your church cope with.. I mean it's a big church. Isn't it like 4,000 people? So all of a sudden your family, you're like thrust into the spotlight and yet you're grieving.

KS: Yes, our story spread like wildfire. It went viral, this young good looking guy, we had three little boys at the time. At the time they were 5, 4, and 2.

BS: Wow.

KS: So our picture and our story was all over the place. And you know what, God's used it for good in so many ways, and because we've been so open and we've said the word suicide and we've shared his story so publicly, God's really used it to save a lot of lives. I just got a message last night, another message from somebody. I get messages every day, almost, from people that say thank you so much. You've saved my life.

BS: Wow. I've even really enjoyed your Instagram, too, because you have a big heart for pastors.

KS: I do, yes.

BS: And you talk about the struggle that pastors go through that you even saw in Andrew, and I think it's ministering to a lot of people who are missionaries, pastors, evangelists, things like that.

KS: That's right, yes.

BS: That's a danger, isn't it, that along with all the pressure that people in leadership, in general, feel in the church, there is sort of this stigma about, for example, taking medication for depression, or things like that. That's a big issue, don't you think?

KS: Yes, you know what, pastors aren't super human, they're human. And pastor's struggle with physical illness like everybody else struggles with physical illness, and that's what mental illness is – it's a physical illness. It's not a choice, it's not the byproduct of not having enough faith, it's not because you're not praying enough, or spending enough time in the Bible. I think sometimes we as Christians can over spiritualize mental illness, and it's actually a real physical illness – our brain actually gets sick. Andrew was healthy and then he got sick. And so I think just better understanding that and saying it's okay if you need medicine to help heal your brain, and it's okay if you need to take a break and rest and seek that time by yourself.

BS: I went to Oral Roberts University and obviously in the Oral Roberts tradition, we're Presbyterian but I have this background where I love the faith aspect of having this Jewish faith where you just plead with God and you don't pray the like 'whatever be thy will.' It's like 'God I need healing!' And I love that aspect of it. Sometimes I think in some of these traditions, it's like you said that nobody would say it's because you don't have enough faith, but they can certainly feel that way. And everybody can feel that way, like why wouldn't God just take this away. And yet we live in a world that's struggling more and more with anxiety. A lot of it has to do with technology and all the screens we're looking at, and all this stuff is impacting us. And God has blessed us, I think, with some of these medications, with therapists, with people that can come into our life that have studied.. it's a medical thing, right? I mean this is a thing that the world..

KS: It's not black and white..

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BS: ..needs to hear.

KS: ..it's so grey, and there's not a one size fits all answer for mental health. It's different for every person in their own journey, so we can't be critical of people and what works for them.

BS: Is there anything you would say to people in the church, in general, today about this issue that you think is like the one thing you'd want them to hear?

KS: Just that mental health doesn't disqualify anybody from ministry, that mental illness is not a choice. That it's okay to get help, and that it's okay to talk about it. And like the more we talk about it, the more people that are hiding out in the dark struggling will step into the light and get help.

BS: Yes, that's right. Well Kayla thank you so much for doing this, and for bringing awareness to this issue. It's a growing thing in our country and in our world, and I just so appreciate that you're helping take away a lot of the shame, I think, that people feel about mental illness. I think you're making a big impact. You're using a tragic story to show people that they don't have to fall into this trap.

And so we just want to say thank you, we think you're so brave.

Actually just a little gift that we want to say thank you for. It's for your Christmas tree, it's an angel, just to say thank you for all you're doing.

KS: That's very sweet.

BS: We just wanted to give this to you to remind you of us.

KS: Thank you so much, Bobby.

BS: Thank you.

KS: Thank you.

BS: God bless you. Thank you, Kayla.

DECLARATION – Bobby Schuller

Hold your hands out like this as a way of receiving from the Lord. Let's say this together: I'm not what I do. I'm not what I have. I'm not what people say about me. I am the beloved of God. 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 "Balaam's Best Friend "

Today we're going to talk about.. this is the second part of our angel series, not something I've done before, where we look at angels in the word of God and how they impact people's lives. But we're doing it now because I think it's important to understand angels being God's direct involvement in someone's life where He really breaks what we think of as the rules of nature, natural order, to get into your life, or to get into people's lives. Many of us have angel stories we would tell one another; ways in which God moved in our life miraculously or had a vision or saw something or heard something. And today we're going to talk about another famous one, and that's the angel story with Balaam's ass, which saying that in church now I should probably say Balaam's donkey. I've always heard it Balaam's ass my whole life, but we're going to say Balaam's donkey. Maybe you have a donkey in your life and we're going to talk about the donkeys that God puts in our lives that we get angry at, that offend our egos, that actually might be sent there to save our lives, and how often we try and lash out at, or feel angry at: people who love us and are trying to help us.

And today I want to encourage you that God has put people in your life that annoy you that are supposed to be there. Very often it's the people we're closest with; the people you love the most, your family members are almost always going to be the ones who also annoy you the most. And although we need to have boundaries and be okay saying no, we also have to be careful to make sure that our egos are in check. If you hear anything I say today, I want you to hear this: go easy on people. We live in a world where you never know what someone's gone through, even your enemies. People have all sorts of challenges and losses and things they're facing, and most people respond by simply bottling it up and putting up a shield, but the soul is rather fragile; it's tender. And very often the people who seem the toughest and the strongest are the ones who are the most fragile.

And so we should be careful as believers to understand that although you are God's beloved son or God's beloved daughter, they are, too. And that very often the people we want to lash out at, who seem to be getting in our way, very often are there to help us. Even our enemies sometimes are part of God's plan to help us. You may not see it now, but many of us have stories in which we realize that the enemies and the barriers and the things that were put in our way, were probably put there by God. Not always, but sometimes. And we look back and realize how those things helped us.

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I still remember when Hannah and I started ministry, and we went from a small church to here with the Hour of Power, and getting online for awhile was a very difficult thing to do because of all of the criticism and personal attacks that we received. I remember there was a whole website that seemed devoted to just criticizing me or at the time John Charles or everybody. And you'd get on and all this stuff was made up, and it would be stuff about my wife, stuff about my children, stuff about my parents and my grandparents that was utterly hurtful and painful and all of this stuff. But then I recognized now, I remember the breakthrough was this – Hannah and I were just getting frustrated with it, I realized, I felt like the Lord said to me, if you can't handle this, you can't handle a bigger platform. And I remember learning that looking back, although that was in my opinion wrong and evil, and it was inappropriate, that through the loving friendships and relationships in our life, God was able to use that to make us a little tougher skinned, and to make us more prepared to lead in the right direction, even when people didn't always approve of it. And that's something leaders need to have. Amen?

And so we often times, that's just one case in my life, but you might not realize that there are enemies in your life that are really there because they're going to help you become the person you need to be to fulfill what God has called you to do. But more likely than that, it's your spouse if you're married. It's your kids. It's your best friend. It's your roommate. It's your boyfriend. It's your girlfriend. Very often, the people we're closest to have these moments where sometimes tenderly and sometimes very directly they're trying to help us either be better relationally, or be better morally, and we get offended, our ego gets in the way, we can't think straight. I want to encourage you today let God use the people in your life to make a difference in your life and let it be the kind of thing that can shape you into proper discipleship.

Okay. So today we're talking about Balaam's donkey. Balaam's donkey. And we're talking about the donkeys that God has put in our lives. If you're hearing double entendre, it's there.

All right! You know, it's interesting is when I started in ministry, Balaam's donkey was an encouragement for me because I remember I used to be so nervous, even when we were college pastors, I would preach to a small group of 25 or 30 people, I'd have to move things around to like help my heart rate get down, and I used to feel like I was so unqualified to speak. And I remember I would pray and this is my real prayer: God, if you can speak through a donkey, you can speak through me! I think the Lord honored that prayer. Okay. So Balaam's donkey and Balaam are the ultimate culmination of this big awesome story in everyone's favorite Bible book, the book of Numbers. Numbers is actually an awesome book that a lot of people avoid because the name itself makes it sound so boring. In Hebrew the word is "Bemidbar," which means "into the wilderness." That sounds like a much better name for a book, doesn't it? I think that is a book. Into the wilderness. And it begins with Moses and the people of God taking a census of who is left over in their group. That's where we get the name Numbers. It begins at Mt. Sinai, and the people have been at Sinai for a year. They've just left Egypt and the journey from Egypt to the Promised Land should take two weeks, but it ends up taking – anybody know? How long? Forty years, with a four. I heard a thirty. Forty years – if only it was thirty. No forty years and it sort of culminates at Sinai where God speaks to His people and they create this tabernacle. All this drama – death and swords and fire and clouds and lightening and law and all this stuff. And so after a year, they gather, they take a census, they form a shape of their people with the ark of the covenant in the middle, followed by the Levites, then the tribe of Judah, then other tribes. It actually forms an image that looks eerily like a cross, believe it or not. And then they begin to move because this cloud that comes out of the tent of meeting, and out of the ark of the covenant, which is God's throne, this cloud begins to move and this is what they've been waiting for, for this cloud to move. It means God is finally going to bring them to the land of milk and honey, and they should be excited, shouldn't they? They're not. Sorry, Jim. They're not excited. They should be. And they begin to walk along and day three, they start to form a coup. They're grumpy, they're hot, they're angry, they're thirsty. It reminds me of like when I go to Disneyland with my kids. And it's like 2:00 in the afternoon and it's a hundred degrees outside and the pavement is sticky and they're just like 'I don't want to.' You don't want to what, you want to go home? 'No!' Pirates of the Caribbean is right there. There's air conditioning. 'I don't want that!' This is how God's people were just all day, every day. He's trying to get them to Pirates of the Caribbean and they won't go. Marching along. In all seriousness, the first major event, there is a coup where Aaron, who is Moses' brother, and his sister, openly begin to chastise Moses and then there's this famous story about the spies that go, there's 12 spies that go look in the Promised Land and two say that it's a land flowing with milk and honey, but the other ten say there's no way we could do it,

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and then there's another coup that begins to brew, and there's a story of snakes and people grumbling. This is where Moses hits the rock and he can't go into the Promised Land. All these stories. It's amazing.

And what you just see through Numbers until you get to the end is just a stiff-necked grumbling, angry people. Till they finally get to the other side of the Jordan, they're this close to entering the Promised Land, and there's just this sea of people and they're all camped there. And the king of Moab, because they're in the plains of Moab, stands on a hill and he looks down and the Bible says he looks at the mass of people, and he's filled with utter dread. He says these people will lick up my land like a cattle licks up pasture. And he says I know what I'm going to do. I'm going to reach out to the great sorcerer Balaam.

So he sends an entourage of men to Mesopotamia, which is about five hundred miles away; that's a long trip. So the people have been camped there for a long time. They're bickering, they're fighting, they're arguing, things are not going well, and this is the king's opportunity to get them somehow.

So he sends for Balaam, the sorcerer, because he says O Balaam, whoever you bless is blessed, and whomever you curse is cursed. And so they go to Balaam and they say we want you to come and curse these people. Balaam says to the entourage, spend the night, I'm going to talk to the Lord, and I'm going to ask Him if I can do this for you. He prays, and God says to him Balaam, no. Isn't it weird, by the way, that a pagan sorcerer like has a personal relationship with God? And it's in the Bible? This is a part of Orthodoxy. I don't know what to do with it.

Balaam says, God, I want to curse these people because it's going to be some good money. And God says no, you can't do it because I am in covenant with these people, I have called them blessed, so you must call them blessed. So Balaam says okay. Goes back to the entourage, says go home, I can't do it. They leave, they go back to the king, the king says no, you don't understand, we need Balaam. Just offer him whatever he wants. They go back to Balaam, he sees them again, he's like okay, what do you want. And they're like the king says you can have all the gold and silver in his house. And Balaam's like, let me just go ask God again one more time. Let me just make sure. So he says wait here, let me pray.

And this is what it says in the Hebrew. This is the literal translation: "hey Lord, are you sure? They're going to pay me a lot!" Just kidding, it doesn't actually say that, but that's effectively what he says. He says to God, are you sure you're going to hold your covenant? Are you sure you want to bless these people? Because God, if you could do me a solid here, I'm going to be driving a Bentley back to Mesopotamia and my gold plated house. This is a great opportunity for me.

And so actually God, in His wrath, tells Balaam to go. So Balaam starts to go and God's plan; it's like God is so offended that Balaam thinks He would go back on His covenant for money, and not even money for God, its money for Balaam, that He sets this angel, sends an angel, probably angel of death, to stand in the road to cut down Balaam as soon as he sees him.

So Balaam gets together with his entourage, he takes his favorite donkey; they've been a great team forever, like Shrek and donkey, just conquering the world. By the way, this is where the donkey from Shrek, this is what it comes from. The talking donkey is from the Bible. His name is just donkey.

So every time I see this story, I'm always hearing Eddie Murphy. 'Shrek! I'm looking down! We're gonna make waffles.' This kind of thing.

Anyway, so he and his best friend, this donkey, they begin to trot along, and there's the entourage of wealthy, powerful men behind them, he's got this business deal, and they're trotting along and the donkey starts to slow down because in the road, only he can see it, is this terrifying angel with his sword drawn. And the donkey's like we're going to go around whatever that is. And so picture this: no one can see it but the donkey, but the donkey begins to go off the path into the field and starts trotting, probably scared, and all of the men who are with him start cracking up and pointing at Balaam, this great noble sorcerer on a runaway donkey going (MAKES DONKEY NOISES). Balaam gets so upset at his donkey he gets off and just starts to beat the poor thing. You stupid donkey! You're embarrassing me. And the poor donkey's going like (MAKES DONKEY SOUNDS) They go along, they avoid danger. Little do they know it.

They go along and in the second part, they come to a path with walls. And so it's wide enough to go around, but there's the angel again, standing in the gap, ready to cut down Balaam. And so his best friend in the world, this donkey kind of takes him around. He's like I don't know about this guy. Takes the long thing, and as the donkey's sort of looking at this angel, kind of scared, he rolls Balaam's foot against the wall.

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And of course Balaam, feeling angry and embarrassed, let's out a shriek of pain, and gets off the donkey, begins to hit him again. You stupid donkey! The poor thing just going (MAKES DONKEY SOUNDS).

And finally, and so again, all these men are laughing at him. Poor Balaam's ego is just eroding and rusting away. And finally they get to this third part, it's probably a mountain pass, and there's this very, very narrow gap, there's no going around, the donkey sees this terrifying angel again, and just lays down and won't move. And Balaam's like that's it. Just starts beating the poor animal. The poor animal's going (MAKES DONKEY NOISES) why are you hitting me?!

And then what's even weirder, so God allows the donkey to speak and say why are you hitting me? And Balaam doesn't go oh my goodness, my donkey can talk. He just talks back at him. And what's the first thing he says? He says you have made a fool out of me. Listen to the ego. You stupid donkey. You've made me look like a fool. You've embarrassed me. And then he says if I had a sword, I'd kill you and cut you down. Listen to the literary device there. There's literally an angel with a sword ready to cut down Balaam, and he's saying to this innocent animal – remember the Torah's so full of literature about care for animals and care for the innocent. You stupid donkey, if I had a sword, I'd cut you down right here.

And then the donkey reasons with him. He says but Balaam, have I ever acted like this before? And Balaam kind of thinks to himself, kind of crosses his arms and says no. And right when he says no, this angel with a sword with death in his eyes looks right at Balaam and he says Balaam, why are you beating this donkey? I was going to cut you down and kill you. And then he adds: but I was going to spare the donkey. Everybody seems to love this donkey.

Balaam, full of dread and fear, just falls on his knees and says, AHFFF! Can you imagine just all of a sudden you see this angel with a sword? He says I'm so sorry! I have sinned! I have sinned against God and goes on and on, and the angel says, keep going.

Now imagine this for a second. This is not the first time God told Balaam to go, it's the second time. The first time God tells Balaam to go is God's wrath. He's sending Balaam to go to his certain death. So Balaam now hearing go, he can't go back, right, because that would be disobeying exactly what God told him to do. But now he doesn't know if he's walking into another angel with another sword. In other words, Balaam is full of dread and the fear of the Lord, which in this case is a good thing. His ego and his desire for money, it all evaporates in this fear that there's some invisible angel somewhere that's going to cut him down. And boy does he become nice to that donkey, I tell you. As they're walking along, he's like good boy, good donkey, good little donkey. You see anything, do you see any angels? Want a carrot? And as they're going along this thing is happening.

The first lesson that we learn from the Balaam story is maybe you have a donkey in your life. Maybe you have somebody in your life, a friend, a spouse, a boyfriend, a girlfriend, a colleague, a co-worker, a neighbor who loves you, loves you. And in their attempt to help you, you see someone who is in the way; someone's who's stopping you from getting where you're going. They see themselves as someone trying to help you because they love you. Very often our egos get in the way. We want to win, we want to succeed, we want to conquer the world, and then our husband, our wife, our teacher, our mentor, our best friend, our roommate tries to help us and instead of listening, we get offended. And like Balaam, our ego gets hit and we lash out, we beat the person, we shut them down or we stonewall them. Very often we forget that the sword was God's but the donkey was God's, too. That was where God's grace was found. And if Balaam had kept going, he would have died.

God does everything slowly. You know that, right? We serve an unhurried joyful God who just sort of knows it will happen when it needs to happen. God's joyful unhurriedness gets compared, I think, to our very hurried lack of joy, need to win, need to succeed. And although God has called you to do great things, and to succeed, and to triumph, and to have victory, we should do it God's way. We never know when we're stepping into a trap. God has put people in our lives that like this donkey are there to bless us.

Maybe you've been the donkey before. Maybe you've been the mom, the dad, the husband, the wife that you're just trying to help the situation, and that person lashes out, gets angry. But here's what we forget is that all of us are sometimes Balaam's donkey, and all of us are sometimes Balaam. Many of us who are here this morning are thinking of someone else who's like Balaam. We're thinking of someone who always treats me like the donkey. But today I want you to think about and ask the question: how have I been like Balaam? How have I boxed out what God wants me to hear because I need more money? Or because I'm afraid, or because I'm driven for success.

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And how have I beat the donkeys and the people and the friends, and even sometimes the enemies that God has put in my life to actually get me back on the right path.

Okay. Well the story goes on like this: Balaam continues on full of fear and dread, and all he knows is he needs to just say whatever God wants him to say. And Balak, the king of Moab takes Balaam up on a hill, and he says look at this sea of people. They're going to destroy us. Curse them. And he says I'll just say whatever the Lord wants me to say. And he looks down at this group of people, and they're all bickering, and they're sinning, and they're fighting, and they're rebelling against Moses, and against God, and do you know what God tells Balaam to do to those people? Bless them. And he just blesses them: you are blessed. Blessings. Blessings. Blessings. Blessings.

And Balak says what have you done? And he says I've done only what God has told me to do. Balak gets angry and says let's try it from a different mountain. Maybe there God will tell you something else to say. So they go to a second mountain. He says curse them! I'll give you all the money in my house! Balaam looks at them, people fighting, sinning, bickering, and God says this: blessings, blessings, blessings, blessings.

Balak again says what have you done? They're going to destroy us! Let me take you to a third mountain. A third time, and this is the best one of all. He says blessings, blessings, blessings, and then prophesies the Messiah: someday there will be someone who will come from these people who rule the world with justice and love, etc. Blessings, blessings, blessings. And Balak says that's it. I was going to pay you all this money. Get out of here. And then what does Balaam do? He looks at the enemies of God's people and he says four curses, curses, curses, curses.

See what's amazing about this story is you have a stiff-necked sinful, rebellious people that feel like they're going through hell, and God arranges for someone to just bless them. I don't know about you, but that's encouraging to me. It's encouraging about God's providence, it's encouraging that the people that we think are our enemies; Balaam was supposed to be an enemy of God's people, becomes a blessing. And I want you to leave thinking about this: that your turmoil, all the difficulties you face, through all of your challenges and all of your strife, God is sending somebody in your life, into your life to bless you. You may be in turmoil, but God has called someone to bless you! Don't beat that person, shame that person, or reject that person, if they've come to help you.

And this is the other thing we learn from angels: we never understand God's providence. We just see such a tip of the iceberg of what God is doing in our lives behind the scenes.

Second – people are a part of the providence in your life. Your wife, your husband, it's a part of God's plan. Your kids, it's a part of God's plan. There are a lot of people in your life – it might be your roommate, it might be your colleague at work, that God is planning to use those people to help you, even though they annoy you.

Have boundaries, say no, sometimes we have to move on, but more than anything, just hear this: go easy on people. If you're angry with your donkey, don't beat him. Ask him what's going on. Somebody's thinking of their spouse right now. Again, the soul is so tender, it's so fragile. It's amazing the pain and suffering we can feel by reading just something randomly online from somebody we don't even know. If we can feel pain in that experience, how much more from the people in our life that we love and respect.

So more than anything, go easy on people. Jesus told us to love our near dweller, to have compassion on them, to even have love for our enemies, love for the Samaritan. Anybody that's in your circle, you don't always have to be close and intimate with everybody, but don't lash out, and believe that maybe you might be beating the very person that God has sent to save you.

Lord, we love you, and we trust your timing, and we thank you that you love us. We ask for forgiveness of our sins, and forgive us for the ways that we've hurt people who love us. Help us, Lord, to be slow to anger, quick to mercy, quick to listen, slow to speak. Help us, Father, to understand the heart of our neighbor, help us to love them. Lord, you loved us, and you still do, it's in Jesus' name we pray, amen.

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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 peace in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, amen.