

9/21/15

Week 39: Christmas Shoes and Smiles

Host: Randy Robison and Sheila Walsh

Bobby Schuller

Randy: Welcome to *LIFE Today*. I'm James Randall Robison; you can call me Randy. I have a wonderful guest. She is an award-winning singer and author and speaker, and the undeniable queen of Women of Faith. Would you welcome Sheila Walsh?

Sheila: Thank you!

Randy: We have a guest today. His name is Bobby Schuller.

Sheila: Sounds familiar!

Randy: Sounds vaguely familiar; doesn't it? Would you welcome Bobby Schuller and we'll find out who he is?

[Applause]

Sheila: It's great to have you here.

Bobby: Thank you. The privilege is mine. I'm so glad to be here with you guys.

Randy: I do want to talk about the book but first of all let's talk about the last name; just establish who you are in this whole family tree.

Bobby: Well, technically, I'm Robert Schuller III. I grew up with that name. I go by Bobby. I always have. My dad went by Robert -- or goes by Robert -- and my grandpa went by Bob. The three of us have always been very, very close and loved one another dearly.

Sheila: The very first time I ever took my son to church was to the Crystal Cathedral because I was singing on a Sunday morning and he was, I think, seven weeks old. So I brought him along. I remember after the service was over, taking him out into this beautiful sanctuary and all he could hear were the birds.

Bobby: Was it your first child?

Sheila: It's our only child.

Bobby: Imagine what it would have been like just being a new morning, singing in a Crystal Cathedral.

Sheila: It was amazing! But it was fascinating to watch my little boy. His eyes just following all these little birds. Because I think it was one of those sunny days so all the glass was open. I thought gosh, what a legacy your grandfather passed down, and the thousands and thousands and thousands of people all around -- millions around the world who have been touched by the Hour of Power.

Bobby: He original starts preaching on top of a drive-in movie theater as a young man when he was my age. He was so criticized for that because he did it in the '50s and they called it "The Passion Pit." He decided I'm going there because that's where real people who don't know God gather. Also, he didn't have a place to worship. So he met there on the top of the snack bar. And the Crystal Cathedral was essentially his way of maintaining an outdoor church in beautiful California, the great weather. How can I still be in church but also be outside? And somebody said to him, Dr. Schuller, that's impossible!

He always said, "Impossible is such an irresponsible word!" He always said that. So any time you want my grandpa to do something you just tell him it's impossible.

Randy: Those kinds of guys, it tends to be the case. We actually have some footage of your early ministry in the Crystal Cathedral.

Bobby: Oh, do you?

Randy: Yeah, let's take a look at this.

Begin video clip

(Small child singing)

The great and the small
To belong to him

To belong to him is --
To me
To me

End of clip

In the studio

Sheila: Adorable!

Randy: Is that what you saw? Adorable? I saw a haircut that needs to come back in style -- is what I saw!

Bobby: It was pretty awesome -- the bowl cut was the best.

Randy: So you had quite the family legacy.

Bobby: Yeah. The Crystal Cathedral was a symbol of my grandpa's dream, which was to make the church a transparent, beautiful place for unbelievers to come and find God. He also came from a place where... he came from a Dutch Calvinist 1930s God hates you, God doesn't love you you're worthless. And he met Norman Vincent Peale who was in the same denomination, Dutch Reform minister who said, "No, God does love us. God wants the best for us. You can be a positive person and a happy person in God's kingdom."

So even though I might not build a Crystal Cathedral, for my grandpa it was a symbol of God's love and grandeur and his ability to immensely bless people. It was his way of saying God really does love you and cares about you.

Randy: It's nice to hear you respect him and the foundation he laid and the ministry he had. At the same time, it's really nice to see you not trying to be him but to find your own path and your own way of ministry. You've done that. So tell us a little bit about what's going on right now on the Hour of Power and at a different church.

Bobby: So the cathedral was lost in large part just because of family drama, and a bunch of other little things. There is nothing big or sexy that happened -- things happened. Unfortunately, the church went bankrupt and everything was lost.

Randy: Well, not everything!

Bobby: Not everything! The most important thing was actually saved and that was the television program because although everybody thinks the cathedral was the most important part, 3,000 people gathered in the cathedral but millions of people gather around the television to watch the Hour of Power each week and they still do.

Randy: And even more importantly, I think you weren't lost in the process. You and I, we grew up around these mega ministries. We see the kids go off or go weird or get disillusioned.

You didn't. What was the anchor that kept you through the turbulent times and landed you in a place where you're ministering?

Bobby: Well, I think my faith was always my own. I would also say that my dad and my grandfather were genuinely themselves; the same people behind closed doors that they were -- my grandpa was so like, [unintelligible] -- just very over the top. He didn't change. When you were around him at Christmas; when he was sitting there in his robe or in his underwear drinking a cup of coffee he was still spilling coffee everywhere as he was waving his arms around. There is something good about that; to know that there is not some kind of TV mask that they're putting on, that they're actually that way in real life. And that the things they're preaching they're living it out; they're a walking sermon.

So for me as a boy, when you're looking to the men in your life, my father, my grandfather, my uncles and others, you're looking at men who are -- and women -- who are living the Christian life in a way you want to model. It is not just words. So for me, that was huge -- for me to see the life of God flowing out of my grandfather and my father.

And for eight years, every Thursday my grandpa would sit for hours with me in his office in that tower and he would pour into me and he would listen to all the stuff I would complain about. He wouldn't always try and correct me even though looking back I know some of the stuff I said was kind of dumb. He was just loving and encouraging and supportive. We would go fishing together, we hung out all the time. So for me, he just poured into my life.

When the cathedral collapsed I actually wasn't at the cathedral at all. I had planted my own church. We started at an American Legion building. We didn't have enough money. So we told God, "Look God, we don't have enough money so we're just going to give everything away." So for the first year, 90% of all the money that came in through our tithes and offerings we gave away to the poor.

Sheila: That's huge! That's kind of a reverse tithe. You kept 10% and gave 90% away.

Bobby: Well, we didn't do it on purpose; 10% is what we needed to pay our rent. So we basically paid our rent and everything else we just gave away. We had no staff. Everyone was a volunteer. We allowed people to sort of raise funding for themselves like missionaries but that was on their own deal. Every dollar that came through the plate the first year was our way of saying, God, we don't have enough to run a church so we're just going to give away everything and we're going to trust that it's either your thing or not. If it's not, that's fine, we'll do something else.

Sheila: So how did the road lead you back to the Hour of Power?

Bobby: So after the church was started, it was called Tree of Life and it was doing very well. We were doing -- great things were happening. And after the collapse of the cathedral, lots of people had left. It pretty much dwindled out. There were maybe a few hundred people in the church. They had no money. There was a whole shift in leadership and so the congregation invited me to come and speak. So we came in essentially thinking that the doors were going to be closed in a few weeks. When I came in, the chief said, "We don't have enough to make our payroll. So we don't -- there is no line of credit. You're going to come in and just --." So our team came in. It's not like I did this but a bunch of really important people came in and made a big difference. Some large donors got behind me. A bunch of key things happened all at one time where now we're experiencing a total revival.

What's amazing is that even though we moved from the Crystal Cathedral, we did like a church swap, so we're in this other Catholic Church that we've made an Evangelical Protestant church, they moved into the cathedral. We have a great relationship with the Catholic Church. Father Christopher is a dear friend of mine; he's an Episcopal rector. Our church is full. We're buying air time and more and more people are watching. Just great things are happening. And it's been easy. It's just happening.

Sheila: That's because it's God. I'm pretty sure that God honored the fact that -- don't you think in that first year of ministry when you just gave everything away? There is something -- scripture says that when you're faithful in little things God will give you much. And as I was watching that video, and when you go over and your grandpa just hugs you, can you imagine how that would bless him now to know that the Hour of Power is still going strong and it is you that is standing in the pulpit? That's amazing!

Bobby: Yeah, it means a lot. I feel like I'm the one that should do it because I understood why he was doing it. I spent those years with him. I know -- I understand why people criticized my grandfather. He was a visionary and he did a lot of crazy things but I understand why he did those things. I wouldn't do some of those things but some of them I would. I understand the heart and the ideas behind it. Whether or not I agree with it, I get it and I think that's important in understanding the future of our church.

Randy: I see some of the history of what you've gone through, the good, the bad, the ugly at times reflected in your book, Happiness According to Jesus. Great title; right? "What it means to be blessed." You take the beatitudes, which is as my pastor likes to say is, "It's the attitudes you need to be." You kind of take a different look. Your angle from suffering is unique. What are you trying to communicate there?

Bobby: So I disagree with probably most sermons that are given on the beatitudes.

Sheila: Excellent!

Bobby: Now that's because I was trained by Dallas Willard. Dallas was a friend of mine and a mentor, briefly before he passed away, recently. Most of what I'm talking about here is just a lot of Dallas Willard restated in my own words.

Randy: Stated where you don't have to read it two or three times to understand it.

Bobby: Yeah exactly. It's Dallas for Dummies maybe. I don't know!

[Laughter]

That's actually -- really John Ortberg is the guy who does that the best. He wrote the forward for my book. He's a good friend. He's done an incredible job of taking very complex ideas from Dallas Willard and making it easy for everyday people.

Randy: So what are you communicating?

Bobby: So beatitudes, everybody teaches that the beatitudes are eight things you're supposed to do. It is like the new eight Christian commandments. We believe that's false; that these are not commandments to -- good things to do but rather they're modes of suffering. So all of the beatitudes are ways in which Jesus' audience, when he begins his suffering.

So he begins his sermon by saying, "Happy are you" that word blessed should be happy, makarios. It really means happy. Eugene Peterson wanted to translate it as lucky when he did The Message translation; they wouldn't let him. But that actually gets closer. Your life is just over -- like secular people would say, "That's the luckiest guy I know." It is a measurement of the good life. So the beatitudes are actually a measurement of suffering. So to be poor in spirit is not a good thing. Poor in spirit means you're spiritually bankrupt. It means you're doubting. An atheist is poor in spirit. Someone who is meek for example, there is ways to translate it but it can also mean you're a doormat. Peacemakers are cops; people that always have to deal with evil all the time and they themselves are often called evil and misunderstood.

The word for *blessed* -- who seek and hungers and thirsts for righteousness, that word is *dikaiosune*, which is normally translated as justice. But for whatever reason, because of tradition, we make it righteousness? It's both? But *dikaiosune*, if you read it, blessed is you who hungers and thirsts for justice? It's a mode of suffering. It's somebody whose daughter was violated and never caught the guy or somebody who had their things stolen from them.

And it ends with "blessed are you when people insult you and persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you." So I believe, and there is a school that believes that the beatitudes are the beginning of a sermon that's about to tell people that no matter how much suffering you're going through, if you build your life on these teachings, you don't need any of the things that the world tells you you need. All you need is this! And if you live this way, you will live the good life.

Sheila: What's really profound about that is that so often I don't think we include that, particularly in our western Evangelical culture. We want the good life to be what we understand the good life to be. We don't want the suffering. And yet, even in my own life I know it's at the points of the darkest moments of my life where I've truly experienced that this world is not my home. I've truly experienced the presence of the risen Christ in the darkest places far more than those supposed glory moments. And you've experienced that too.

I love the way you interpret, reframe happiness. You have experienced that with your son, even. You have a son who struggles.

Bobby: Yeah. My son Cohen, he's actually Robert IV. Wonderful kid! He's the happiest, greatest little boy. He is three and a half. And last year, actually, the week that I was called to be lead pastor my wife was told she had a chronic illness that wouldn't go away by Mayo Clinic -- so the best clinic in the world. My son, my grandmother, Arvella had passed away suddenly; it was tragic, out of the blue. And then my son had a terrible epileptic seizure. And all three happened within the first few days that I was called to be the lead pastor. It felt like an incredible spiritual attack. That was actually the beginning of a long journey for us where we found that he didn't just have epilepsy, he had a brain malformation called polymicrogyria. It means he has essentially a bunch of divots in a part of his brain that could cause developmental issues, seizures, and cerebral palsy.

So we've been dealing with this issue where part of his body doesn't work real well and he has these seizures. Several times he had prolonged -- prolonged grand mal seizures that were lasting five, six, seven, ten minutes.

One time on a trip to Israel, over the summer, I was on my way to Israel and going through Newark I got a phone call from my wife saying this they didn't know if my son was going to make it. They weren't able to revive him. He had a horrible seizure and they weren't able to revive him in the ambulance. So I flew back. I stayed in this flea bag motel in New York where there was like a hooker and a gang outside of my room. I couldn't sleep. I was lying there worried all night long. I flew home, gratefully to see that my son was okay. But developmentally was having issues.

This was a tremendous source of suffering for our whole family that I'm still dealing with. You're still grieving, still feel angry at God; and those are normal things. Those are part of the Christian journey. Yet through it all we found that living the Jesus kind of life and the inner life of the Holy Spirit is the only thing that's sustained us in the midst of the long nights in CHOC Hospital and not knowing if my son was going to have normalcy.

Sheila: The thing that I took away most from your book was there was kind of on mission 24/7 about the way you write. I love when you said stop, like at the end of the Sermon on the Mount -- basically it's, "Stop thinking about it and do it." I love that because so often we talk about things that we know are right but then you're saying Jesus is saying, "Okay, enough talk! Get up and do this."

Bobby: Yeah, John Ortberg talks a lot about the knowing/doing gap. He talked about that and it shows in businesses all the time where a business will, for example, talk about wanting to do customer service. So they're going to have training on customer service, they're going to get new customer service T-shirts and a new customer service sign and they're going to have a whole week retreat. Everybody is going to learn about customer service, and all this education with the best pros in the world. Then what happens? Nothing changes. It's called "The knowing/doing gap." I'm glad it doesn't happen in the church; right? That's exactly what happens! So very often we sit in the church and we listen and we listen to a sermon and we think oh, Sarah really needs to hear this sermon. It's like, brother, that sermon is for you. And very often we don't apply these things.

One of the reasons I'm so passionate about the Sermon on the Mount is that unfortunately, guys like Martin Luther who were brilliant and wonderful didn't believe we're supposed to live the Sermon on the Mount. It's just completely wrong. The end of the Sermon on the Mount says... we always say we build our lives on Jesus. But Sermon on the Mount says "on Jesus' teachings." It says: Blessed is the man -- he says: Anyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a man who builds his life on the rock. There is a difference. It is not just the person of Jesus -- and it is -- it's also his teachings; to love my enemies?

How many sermons do you hear about loving your enemies? It should be almost every Sunday. That's one of the hardest parts. Loving my enemies, doing my good works in secret, praying in secret -- what about investing in my secret life with God? The part that nobody sees or nobody knows?

Sheila: That doesn't Instagram as well; does it?

[Laughter]

Bobby: That's a good point, Sheila! That is where so much of our world is that our technology is forming people to become even more narcissistic than they're prone to be. So we become very, very concerned about our public lives and our reputation and not as concerned about our secret lives.

Randy: Good stuff! I would encourage you to get the book, *Happiness According to Jesus*, and watch the Hour of Power.

But I want to give people an opportunity to do exactly what you're talking about and that is to put your faith into practice; not just talk about doing things but to actually do something. So this Christmas we want to make it very special for a lot of children all around the world by giving them some special gifts; not just gifts that will end up on the shelf or in the closet within a few months but gifts that will truly change their lives long term. Watch this and pray about how you can be involved as we share Christmas shoes and smiles.

On the mission field

Kathy: Well, that's awful! That is awful! I can't even imagine just walking around with this toe -- all the dirt and the gravel, it looks so infected. I'm afraid it's going to start creeping up his foot. The thing about it is if he'd just had this shoe on -- just the simple things that we take for granted -- if he'd just had this shoe on his foot, this wouldn't have happened.

Chris: One of the reasons these shoes are so important, walking barefoot, they can contract a lot of diseases so I'm looking at their feet right now and the toenails are completely gone. They feel like the bottom of your shoe probably does.

Announcer: This year, you helped *LIFE Outreach* provide food and water for children all over the world and they're eternally grateful. This coming Christmas season we'd like to put an extra smile on their face by giving them a pair of shoes for their very own. And for children who have difficulty smiling because of a cleft palate, doctors are available to perform corrective surgery giving them a chance for a healthy life.

Chris: Melanie. There you go, Melanie.

Announcer: This coming season, help us provide children Christmas shoes and smiles.

End of clip

In the studio

Randy: I love seeing that! Don't you like seeing them smile?

Sheila: The thing that is amazing to me, Randy is I think of what Christmas morning is like in our house, and there is just wrappers everywhere. When Christian was little he played with the box more than he played with what was in it. But the simple joy that came to one of those children who just received their very first pair of shoes.

Randy: And a lot of times it is their very first pair of shoes.

Sheila: It's so little. So often you think, if I knew what Jesus would do, I would do it. This is a no-brainer. You don't even have to pray about this. It's so clear that that's what Christ would have us do, to reach out to children and to give them a gift that will probably change their life. If they got a cut on their foot and they get an infection their whole immune system is compromised. But a simple pair of shoes, as a Christmas gift, could change everything!

Randy: You don't normally think of shoes as a life or death situation like we do with the water and the food but it actually can be, like you say -- the infections, it's hard to watch. I'm not a big feet person anyway. It's hard to watch but you need to see it because you need to understand that we can do something about it; \$3.60 provides shoes for a child. Your gift of \$36 will provide shoes for ten children. Some of you can give more than that; \$144 provides shoes for 40 children.

And then the surgeries, the cleft palate, the cleft lip. In the United States, we just take care of that when the kid's young but in these third-world countries it is a big deal to go in and do a surgery. But we can do it. And that will give that child the ability to smile. I think it will put a smile on your face too when you know that you've reached out on Christmas to share the love of Christ with these children.

Your gift of \$500 will provide the surgery; a gift of \$1,000 will provide the surgery and will provide 275 pairs of shoes. That's a lot of children with a lot of shoes and a lot of smiles on Christmas. So I hope you will do what you can. We have some wonderful gifts that we would like to give you when you participate.

Sheila: Do you know one of the things we want to do? Barry and I decided and there is another thing we're going to do, of which I think I get to do in another program, I'll tell you about. But we want to pay for like 40 pairs of shoes but wrap a present and put it under our tree, and inside just put a simple card. I want our son to unwrap this present; that he'll see part of the Christmas money went to provide shoes for other children. I think that's great to include our kids.

Some of these kids, they're not waiting on the latest iPhone. A simple pair of shoes would change their life. And how much more do you think you and your family would just enjoy Christmas when you know that you've extended beyond your own four walls to make such a difference? Can you imagine how that will impact the mom and dad to think that somebody they will never meet down on this earth, cared enough about them to take time to send some shoes to their children for Christmas?

Randy: Thank you by the way for doing that!

Sheila: Our joy!

Randy: And thank you for participating. This is the last week. We need to wrap this up, no pun intended. And we're going to help a lot of kids so call!

Begin video clip

Announcer: Poverty is a killer and because of it, children needlessly suffer not only from a lack of food and clean water but also from a lack of things we take for granted such as a healthy smile or a simple pair of shoes. For most of these children, they've never owned a new pair of shoes. And while that may seem minor in the light of all their needs, walking with bare feet puts them at risk of life-threatening infections that could lead to crippling consequences, disease, and even death.

By responding today you can help *LIFE* immediately secure and begin shipping Christmas shoes to 200,000 children around the world just in time for the holidays. Your gift of \$36 will help provide ten pairs of shoes. A gift of \$72 will help provide 20 pairs. And a gift of \$144 will help provide 40 pairs of Christmas shoes for children in need.

With your gift of any amount be sure to request this beautifully crafted green antique shoe ornament, a treasure to place on your tree each holiday season. With your gift of \$100 or more you may also request a special boxed set of *LIFE*'s Christmas shoe ornaments from past years.

Finally, please consider a gift of \$1,000 or more to help provide over 275 pairs of shoes or two children with corrective cleft palate surgeries. And you may request our beautifully framed canvas print of "The Forest Chapel."

This is the last week! Please call, write, or make your gift online today!

End of clip

On the mission field

James: Well, we literally stopped by the road where I say we knew we would bring them shoes and I'm confident that we will because children like these need shoes -- all over the world. It is amazing. You may say, "Why would they stop and let you take a picture with them?"

Well, the truth is they stopped because I just got out and sat down here on the road and smiled at them. And they came over and started sitting down by me.

Then we explained to the parents through our missionary interpreter that our plan was to come right back to this area, this village and bring shoes. So that is our intention. But it is going to take you making that possible.

I'm asking you to give as many pairs of shoes as you can to put on these beautiful, beautiful feet of these beautiful children. Thank you! Thank you for your help!

End of clip

In the studio

Randy: I do hope you're calling. If you can't call right now write the number down, call later. Go to the web site. While you're at the web site you can watch other *LIFE Today* programs. I want to mention that.

But I wanted to thank our special guest today, Bobby, we appreciate you opening up and sharing from your life. And I appreciate Miss Sheila Walsh. Glad to have you! Tune in again every day to *LIFE Today*! Thank you!