

Anything is Possible in the Kingdom of God

By Bobby Schuller

Today I want to convince you that anything is possible for your life if you're doing life with God. I want more than anything for everyone in this church to believe one simple thing: that if you do life with God, he can do anything with you. I believe that with all my heart. That God loves to do impossible things with improbable people. That God loves to take imperfect people and do amazing things. And I want to convince you today that if you live your life by faith, that God's going to do tremendous things in your life. It's so easy to get to a place and think God's done with me, God's mad with me, my life is over, my future is dark, but I want to affirm in your life to believe something good is always coming. That is the era in which we live. Something good is always coming for you. And that is a word from God to you.

I believe that something is good, and I have become a possibility thinker. I've become the type of person that believes that seeing a world where anything is possible makes you smarter, more successful, and believe it or not, a more moral person. Happy people, grateful people and joyful people love people better and endure suffering better than everybody else. And the root to all possibility thinking, the root to all positivity is rooted in knowledge in the word of God that says all things are possible if you do things with God. And that's what I want to tell you

today. And I learned this in my life by being a possibility thinker. I learned truly that I am usually my biggest limitation. That it's usually me who's trying to limit God in my life because of fear.

I remember when I was a kid, and I was in high school and I was a part of this youth group, and I remember there was this group called Teen Mania that used to challenge teenagers to go to pretty crazy places. Looking back now as an adult, I can't believe this actually existed, but they would recruit teenagers, Christian teenagers to go to the Middle East and parts of Africa and dangerous parts of Asia, China when it wasn't as safe as it is now, Vietnam. And I signed up and I wanted to go to Russia. They had this plan where they were going to send teenagers to Russia to a little orphanage outside of the city of Saint Petersburg. And there in that orphanage, basically, many of these Russian people would just basically dump their kids for the summer, and these kids would have almost no supervision. They were using drugs, etc., and Teen Mania wanted to send this group of teenagers to mentor these sort of tween-agers; kids that are 12/13, Russian kids.

And so I said sign me up, I want to go. I want to do this. Problem was I had five weeks to raise the money to go. You have to raise your own money and the price tag to me, a 17-year-old boy in Oklahoma \$3,200. Now \$3,200 is a lot of money today, but when I was in high school, you might as well have just said a bazillion dollars. You might have well just said a million, bazillion dollars. I'd never seen \$3,200. I didn't even know

anybody that had \$3,200. I couldn't imagine where I would get \$3,200, and not only that, get it in five weeks? And not spend it on pizza and Taco Bueno. I mean I don't know.

So no, I decided I wanted to do this. And the reason I decided to do it is through a conversation with my Grandpa Schuller. And if you don't know who he is, he did a lot of amazing things that were very expensive, including building a giant glass cathedral here in Orange County. And he was a guy that was able to raise money. And so I talked to my grandpa when this dream came to me and I had five weeks, and I was sort of just trying to decide whether or not I should do it. And he said absolutely you should do it, and I'll never forget what he said. He said Bobby, if you have the vision, the money will come. Man, can I tell you, I put him to the test. I put him to the test. And I believe, even to this day, if you do have the vision, the money will come. If it's a good vision, people want it to exist, the resources, the volunteers, whatever you need to make it happen, it will come.

And I decided to put that to the test. I had a vision to help kids in Russia and I needed \$3,200 to do it in five weeks, so I did everything I could. I started doing all sorts of chores, I was washing people's cars, money was coming in, but it was coming in slow. It was \$20 here, \$30 there. I was going to Willie George's church, and he was recruiting people to raise money for mission's trips and I did this thing where I'd work at Camp Dry Gulch and I would flirt with Hannah; we weren't dating yet,

but she was in the youth group. And I would move rocks.. do you know what railroad ties are? They're like these big wooden things and get splinters in your hands. I almost broke one of my fingers. Anyway, I did that all for two weekends in a row and raised \$40. I worked it out later, I think I was getting paid about \$2 an hour in mission credit.

Anyway, I was at the very end of five weeks and I couldn't believe it, I had maybe raised I think \$800 towards my \$3,200. And now I was starting to despair. I thought man, God, I thought you called me to do this. I stepped out in faith. I did everything I could to raise this money. And all of a sudden, at the 11th hour, and isn't it always the 11th hour? Man God's timing is (RUSS – annoying) thank you, Russ. That is one of our sayings here at Shepherd's Grove. God's timing is (AUDIENCE – annoying). It's annoying. It is so annoying because God likes to stretch you. And it came in at the most annoying time ever, the 11th hour.

And let me tell you how it happened. My mom, I didn't know this, because I was graduating, she sent out all of these notifications of my graduations with this handsome devil on it. Look at that guy. Look at that guy. Once I got pulled over and I was going for blonde hair, but the police officer put it down as red. Probably was trying to decide between orange and.. anyway.

My mom sent these notifications out saying "Bobby's graduating!" And she sent it out to hundreds of people. People I've never heard of, old family friends, friends of my grandparents, friends of.. cousins and

second cousins, and money just started pouring in. People were sending all of this congratulations money for graduating, as if that's, you know, anyway.. so I graduated high school and all this money poured in, and guess how much came in: \$3,200. I had exactly the amount of money to go to Russia. Anything is possible if you follow God. Anything! And that's amazing!

Look, its winter. And when we go into winter, things get darker and we go into this Christmas season and people like to get negative. They like to make fun of Black Friday, which Black Friday's awesome. You get all this money off of.. I mean people have to get negative and I hear pastors say it, and I've said it before that Christmas is the season in which suicide is at its highest. Did you know that's not true at all? That's a totally old wives tale. Actually the highest season of suicide is spring. Christmas is one of the lowest seasons of suicide because people are getting together and they're hanging out and they're connecting deeply with one another. They're getting a break from work. They're getting a fresh vision for their lives. And that's what God has for you this Christmas. Not a negative dark, downer Christmas. Man it's getting darker and Christmas is during the winter solstice, but picture it as though the lights are going down because a great show is about to happen.

I want you to know something good is coming into your life, and Christmas is such a great time to take a step back from work to be with

the people that you love, to evaluate your life, and to dream big and to start building dreams in your life. And as you build your dream that dream is going to build you. To start thinking about where you can go and what you can accomplish and what the Lord wants from you. It's good to take a break to have a winter. You know crops need a winter in order to grow, and human beings need a winter in order to grow. You need a time to rest and I think that God is going to have a word for you this Christmas and it's going to be good.

And this is from the Lord and it's to you: Keep hope alive. Good things are always coming. And we have every right to make that claim and every reason to make that knowledgeable proclamation because it is rooted in knowledge, amen?

So things may be getting darker but that just means you're going to get brighter. Things may be getting colder, but that means you're going to get warmer. I believe that God has us do some of our greatest things in our darkest hours. And I just believe good things are coming for you, and I'm happy for you, and I should be because you're a good person.

All right. So everything changed at year zero. There is no year zero, but you know what I mean. There is this weird thing, there's this two a-pox of human history: BC and AD. And it all revolves around one thing. Do you know what it revolves around? Christmas. That's what BC stands for – before Christmas. Before Christmas. No, BC actually means before Christ, but here we're going to call it before Christmas, because it's

basically the same thing. The year one is the year Jesus was born, more or less. And AD stands for not after death; AD stands for Anno Domini. That means in Latin the year of our Lord. You see something happened at year one. The reason all of human history, every religion, every world view, and every nationality breaks down the date to AD and BC is because something really important happened there. Everything changed in the coming of the real person of Jesus Christ. He brought in his body heaven. He brought all the possibilities of heaven with him in his very flesh, and he made the abundance of heaven open up to you and to me. Isn't that great news? That on AD one, we entered into the year of our Lord when heaven invaded earth. We are living in the year of God where anything is possible.

And this was prophesied for hundreds of years. This was the hope of the world that Christ would come, and he did. And that is very, very good news. It's good news for you, it's good news for me because we serve a God that says anything is possible. We serve a God that says it's only over when you're dead and when you die things get even better. And when you die, it's like waking up and you enter into my kingdom, into the fullness of your inheritance. See only good things are coming for you. No matter where you are, only good things are coming for you, if you respond in faith. The birth of Jesus Christ was the turning of the tide in human history. It's where everything turned around.

The bible is not naïve to the suffering of the world. When you read especially the Old Testament in the Jewish scriptures, you read about how the bible authors really struggled with this question – why do bad things happen to good people? One of the first books of the bible ever written Job deals only with that question. Most of the minor prophets, majority of the Psalms are psalms of laments: ‘Oh Lord, how long will you forget the poor?’ ‘How long will you forget the downcast, oh Lord?’ ‘How long must we sing this song?’ The very words of Jesus Christ on the cross, ‘my God, my God, why have you forsaken me,’ quoting the psalmist. See the bible is not naïve to the fact that people are suffering. And it gives us stories and it gives us words to encapsulate our suffering but the bible also promises us that in the midst of your suffering, you will overcome. That you have everything you need to endure into victory, and you will, and I’m proud of you.

And I know many of you, maybe you’re going through a hard time right now. Maybe you’ve lost a loved one. Maybe you have a kid that’s sick, grandkid. Maybe you’ve endured the loss of a job or whatever it is you’re going through. I just want to say to you, you may be wrestling with this question – why did this happen to me? And I want to encourage you to let that question go. Everybody has that question, but even if you get the answer at this time, it’s not going to help you. You’re asking the wrong question. The question you should be asking is will I get through this. The question you should be asking is will I get victory. And the

answer is yes. Victory is yours. Good things are coming for you. That's the answer. I know we want to know, we want to know, and someday you will know. But a part of living life of faith means not having all the answers and trusting a very big God who does have all the answers.

I remember once when I was in seminary, and I was in the King David hotel and I was sitting with a couple of rabbis. These guys. Benicio del Toro was there, second from the right. Just kidding, that's from "Snatch," but I'm trying to give you a visual. And I'm sitting in the King David lobby, I think it was called, at LAX and was about to go to Israel, and I was sitting there with these two; Hannah, were you there? Yes, Hannah and I were there together. And we were sitting and talking to these two Orthodox rabbis. And I said, we were talking back and forth and they said "what do you do?" And I said "I'm a pastor." And they said "are you evangelical? We like evangelicals because evangelicals like Israel." And I said "I am an evangelical and I'm sort of rare breed of evangelicals. We're called Calvinists. We're the frozen chosen."

And he said "and what does that mean? What does Calvinist mean?" I said, "Well we're basically really obsessed with the sovereignty of God and God's planning of everything. And we talk a lot about philosophically." And I just started asking him, I said "well what do the Jews believe? What do the Orthodox Jews believe? I mean did God know we were going to meet. Did he know I was going to sit here? And did he know I was going to pick up this pen and he knew everything that was

going to happen, and he preordained it all. If he knows everything and he has control over everything, did he make everything happen? And if so, what does that say about the character of God and about our own free will.” And I’m going on and on like this. And then I just finished, and they looked at me a little bit like I was an idiot. And they looked at each other and looked at me, and one guy goes “who can know such things?”

Can I just tell you, man, I was in the heap of my Calvinism and at the time, that was really very helpful for me. It really was super helpful for me to just be like I don’t know. There are some things maybe in life that we spend a lot of time dwelling on, that aren’t going to be helpful to you, to me, or to what God’s called you to do. Sometimes it’s good to just live in that mystery and to be okay with that. It’s okay in the midst of your suffering to be angry at God. It is. And it’s okay in the midst of your suffering to feel confused. But I want you to know that God is on your side, he hasn’t forgotten you, and you can keep hope alive. Good things are coming for you. Believe it. You’re doing life with God all things are possible for you. That’s very, very good news for me, and for you.

So why are bad things happening to you? I don’t know. You certainly don’t deserve it. And God is not punishing you. That I know, too. But I want you to know whatever it is you’re going through, God believes in you, he’s on your side, he’s going to get you through this because he loves you and I love you, too. Amen?

This is the question that the pagans wrestled with. We don't have to wrestle with this anymore. In the pagan religions of old, there's this idea that God that there's not one god, there's many gods, almost every early nationality had this. There is a god of the trees, and a god of the sky, and a god of the sun, and a god of the mountains. And there would be hundreds, sometimes thousands of gods. The gods were many, the gods were mad, and the gods were mean. And they were always warring with one another, and we were like these little pawns that had to appease them. They would war with one another; they would side with one another and human beings sort of felt like they were caught in this bizarre battle in the cosmos. And in the full revelation of God to Abraham, the Jewish people came and said no, you don't need to worry about this. There aren't a bunch of gods out there. There's one God. And Israel basically said this: God is one. God is just. And God is love.

And that's just what I want to say to you today. You're wrestling, is God punishing me? Has God forgotten me? Maybe you're wrestling with your faith. Maybe you wonder why these bad things are happening to you. I want you to know it's going to make sense in the end. God is one. He is just. And he is love. He is love. And he loves you so much. And he's on your side.

And so the Israeli people, the Jewish people, rather, proclaimed that someday God was going to save the world, he was going to turn the tide. In the midst of saying God, have you forgotten us, in the midst of

saying God, why all the suffering, in the midst of saying God, why all this evil, there was this prophetic voice that said someday he's going to come and he's going to set things right.

One of the books that talked about this best was the book of Isaiah, oftentimes referred to as the fifth gospel because it talks about the coming of the Messiah so much. In this Advent passage, which I love, I think it's one of the most beautiful passages, talks about the coming of the Messiah. Now when it talks about Jesse, by the way, Jesse was the house of David. It's the royal family. And this is what it says. Isaiah says this to a suffering people:

“A shoot will come from the stump of Jesse. From his roots a branch will bear fruit. The spirit of the Lord will rest on him. The spirit of wisdom and of understanding. The spirit of counsel and of might. The spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord. And he will delight in the fear of the Lord. He will not judge by what he sees with his eyes, or decide by what he hears with his ears, but with righteousness he will judge the needy. With justice he will give decisions for the poor of the earth. He will strike the earth with the rod of his mouth. With the breath of his lips he will slay the wicked. Righteousness will be his belt and faithfulness the sash around his waist.

The wolf will lie with the lamb. The leopard will lie down with the goat. The calf and the lion and the yearling together and a little child will lead them. The cow will feed with the bear. Their young will lie down

together and the lion will eat straw like the ox. The infant will play near the cobra's den and the young child will put its hand into the viper's nest. They will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain. The earth will be filled with the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea."

And can I tell you, when Jesus came to this world, all of that began, everything in history changed. And as Jesus walked this earth, everywhere he went he taught and just began healing people and saving people, and turning the whole religious system on its head. And he gave his life and was raised from the dead for you and for me that we may inherit the full abundance of the kingdom of heaven. That we can pray with faith and believe on earth, as it is in heaven. On earth as it is in heaven. On earth as it is in heaven.

We serve a Jesus Christ who looked to his disciples, who said things like I'm just a tax collector. I'm just a Samaritan. I'm just a prostitute. I'm an outcast. I'm a sinner. And he said to you all things are possible with those who do life with God. That's what Matthew says. With man it may be impossible, but with God, all things are possible! All things are possible to you if you do life with God. That's good news. Your life is limitless. When you do life with God, think about what's possible for you if you just believe. If God is real and you're really doing life with him, think about what is possible in your life.

I remember when my grandpa Schuller was on a plane once, he told this amazing story. He met a mathematician and he said you know when I was in college, this mathematician, my graduate school, I was running late for my class and I got there super late and I missed the lecture on this math problem. The math problem was on the board and I came in and my professor looked at me, and I said what's this problem? And he says it's due on Friday. And he said all right. So he wrote the problem down. It was maybe a Tuesday or something. And gosh he went back to his dorm room and it was a tough problem. He worked on it all week long. And finally he sorted it out and on Friday he came in and he presented the solution to the professor. And the professor said wait, what? He said this problem has been unsolvable forever. No one's ever solved this problem. This is an unsolvable problem, we thought. And he went through and.. you solved this. You solved this problem.

And see because the guy came into class late, the professor had given a whole lecture on how solving this problem was impossible. And he missed that whole lecture. And so as a prank, the professor told him its due on Friday to drive him crazy, but the kid not knowing it, just solved it. Because nobody told him it wasn't solvable. Nobody said it's impossible so he just believed somebody solved this. Lots of people solve this, so he never gave up. He solved the problem, he turned it in, and because of that became a world famous mathematician. What a great prank. The professor just launched him into an amazing career.

How many things do we think are impossible because people say they are; because we listen to people instead of listening to the word of God. Forever people thought it was impossible to break the four minute mile. They thought that no human being had the athletic capability to run a mile in four minutes, and then in 1954/1956, it was done. That one record was broken. One man had finally done it. And after that, a bunch of people ran the four minute mile, like it was no problem. What is it? You see there's so many of us are so bound here. We forget that God is in our bodies. And that if God wants us to do something, we can do it. God loves to use imperfect people to do impossible things and I believe it with all my heart. Something good is coming for you, something real good.

This passage in Isaiah that we're reading about, it sounds like when we read it talks about this stump. And maybe you think you're a stump. Maybe you think that you've been chopped down. If you cut a tree down and you chop it down, it's dead. It's not going to grow back. And in this picture, there's this gritty picture of a stump, maybe you feel like this. You're this stump, and you're just sticking out of the ground and you're never going to grow again. But something happens when we get a perspective of being a part of something bigger than ourselves. When it stops being about just me, it's about being a part of something much bigger and we stand back, we can actually see the big picture.

And see there's a big difference between being a tree that's cut down and a tree that's pruned. A tree that's cut down is never coming back, but a tree that's been pruned is just made to be stronger. And yes, it's uglier, think an ugly tree. But it's in its best position ever right now. Even though it looks ugly and it looks battered and it looks dead, it's more alive and it's ready to bear more fruit than it ever has, and that's you. You think you're cut down, you're not. You're a part of something much bigger than you. You can't be cut down. You can only be pruned.

Sometimes God does the pruning, and sometimes the devil does it on accident. I really believe that. But if you respond with faith, you won't be cut down, you'll just be pruned. You'll be ready in this winter of your season to come back with an amazing spring to do amazing things for God and for others, and to bear incredible fruit, if you respond with faith. If you stop saying it's impossible. Impossible is such an irresponsible word. Nothing is impossible for God. Believe it.

There's a story of a man named Ben Underwood who had, I think it's called sonar sight, or something like this, and he had taught himself as a blind man to be able to see using sound. It's an amazing you can see YouTube videos on it. He would make a clicking sound with his mouth and by doing that, he was able to hear how sound waves were bouncing off the walls. And so it's sort of like a bat or a dolphin. He was able to use his ears to see objects in the room and around him. It's a phenomenal thing. So he could do things like pick up the telephone and

walk around his house, and he could even ride his bike by making this clicking sound. He was actually able to see.

One of the most amazing parts about the story is the reason he went blind is because he had cancer in his eyes, and so he was just a little boy. And when he came out, his momma was there, her name was Aquanetta, and he came out of this surgery with no eyes. And he said momma, I can't see. And here was her response: you can see. And first she took his hands and she put them on her arm. She said you can see with your hands. And then she took her arm and she put it up to his nose so he could smell her perfume. He said you can see with your nose. And then she went, she whispered into his ears and she said, Ben, you can see with your ears. She said you may not see like you used to, but you can see. You see where everyone had said he's blind she said you're not as blind as you think. You can see in new ways. And by beginning his journey of blindness in that way, he became a possibility thinker, someone that said maybe seeing is possible for me, and developed this bizarre method whereby making sounds he could see and live a much more normal life in the world around him because his mom believed in him and never said that he was going to be blind.

This story was talked about and inspired another girl named Liz Murray, who was living on the streets of New York. She was a homeless lady. And both of her parents were drug addicts, and they both died when she was 15. And what typically happens to teenagers in that is

they usually end up going to drugs themselves. But not her. She said when her mom died, it was incredibly tragic for her, and yet at the same time, she got this idea that because something had radically changed in her life, maybe it didn't have to always be this way. And so she said I fell in love with possibility. And for me possibility was the "what if" voice. I started to just ask the question what if. What if a school let me go back to high school? So she went around asking high schools, hey will you let me in? And most of them said no, till she finally found one. They said yep, you can go here. And then she said what if I can get straight A's? And she did. She got a vision for straight A's and got them. And then she thought what if I could go to Harvard and what if I got in? So she applied to Harvard and she got in. And then she said well what if I could get somebody to pay for this? So she started writing scholarships and New York Times paid for it because her story was so compelling. And now she's become this incredible person who says never lose your love for possibilities. Never lose the "what if" voice. Never lose your passion! And never stop believing that anything is possible.

Friends, I want you to fall in love with life because life has limitless possibilities when you do life with Jesus Christ. He can do anything through you if you just believe. Isn't that his biggest criticism of his disciples? Oh you of little faith. If you just had the faith of a mustard seed, you could say to that mountain move and be thrown into the sea

and it would. I want to be a person of faith. I want to be a person that can see the possibilities that are made available to me in Christ Jesus.

You know all science shows that people naturally lean towards the negative. And there will be lots of people in your life, I call them impossibility thinkers. People that love, that are so smart, they love to tell you how limited your life is and how impossible your future is. And I love to just.. the proof is in the pudding. Just do it and show them that they're wrong.

I want you to know that you don't have to listen to impossibility thinkers. And although it's good to be rational and good to be sane, sometimes it's also good to be a little crazy. Sometimes it's good to be a possibility thinker. Sometimes it's good to actually believe that if God wants you to do something, you can actually do it. And I do believe that for you. I believe that your future is as bright as you believe it can be. I believe that thinking about the possibilities of life, I believe that being positive, I believe that being hopeful, that being joyful, that being loving and that being kind is harder than being critical, being negative, and telling everybody how impossible everything is. And that's why I'm proud of you. The world needs hopeful visionaries like you that can see the possibility of an amazing future for your life and for the lives of others. And we need more people who are not limited by impossibility but know that we serve a God that says we can do anything if we do life with him.

See the best in people and you're going to get the best out of people. See the best in your life, you're going to get the best out of your life. And see the best in your future, you're going to get the best out of your future. God sees the best in you, and I know you have great things in store if you just continue to be the person he created you to be. That when he says I want you to do something great, you just say yes, let's do it. Good things are coming for you and that's a word of God from me to you.

Let's pray: Lord, thank you so much for calling us here. We love you and we believe in the world that says you're sick, you're dying, you're failing, you're a loser, you're a sinner, we say I trust God. We say Lord that you are bigger than every obstacle that we're facing and we thank you that you have called us, you've ordained us, and that you're going to use us if we just respond with yes, and we do, in Jesus' name, amen.