

Believe in the God Who Believes in You

By Bobby Schuller

Today, if you hear nothing else that I say, I want you to hear something, and this is actually a direct quote from my other grandpa. It is this: believe in the God who believes in you. Today I want you to know something – that God really does believe in you, that God is on your side, and that God is rooting for you. So often in life, we think either God doesn't exist or God has abandoned me, or God is punishing me. No, you are God's beloved daughter; you are God's beloved son. He is on your side, in spite of the mistakes that you've made, and they may have been many. In spite of all of your flaws, warts and all, God is rooting for you. And I need you to know, if we are going to be men and women who walk in the ways of Jesus Christ, we have to first begin to believe that God loves us, he wants the best for our lives, and that a morally good life is also the fullest, richest life that's available to us.

So I want to begin today by asking you, even commanding you, believe in the God who believes in you. It will do you good. I believe, and we believe in this church, every human being deserves dignity. You know if I ever see good guys treating bad guys without dignity, I wonder if they're truly good guys. I believe that at the heart of Christianity is this idea that although there is war and there are all of these things that we face in life, at the heart of Christian behavior is this idea that every single human being deserves dignity. That God does not like it when we mock

others, when we shame others, when we demean others. God likes it and approves of it when we treat, as Jesus teaches us, even our enemies with love.

I believe every human being deserves dignity, and that includes you. And maybe you've been shamed, maybe you've been shamed by religion. Maybe you've been hurt by your parents. You grew up in a super strict household and you feel that to be a believer, to believe in God means it's a bunch of rules, and it's just feeling guilty all the time. That type of thinking is the main thing Jesus criticized in his teaching ministry was religious religiosity people. Why? Because God's heart for you is freedom, fullness, life, joy, happiness, and it's available to you today. God believes in you. God is on your side. You are God's kids. He's not going to abandon you and he's rooting for you, even when you make mistakes. We must start there if we're to believe anything.

Then, here in this church, we start with dignity. We always move to discipleship. I believe you really begin to feel dignified when you walk as a happy student of Jesus. I just believe in character and integrity. I think that when we walk with character, integrity, confession, openness, honesty, vulnerability, we start to live at a sufficiency that is only made available in the kingdom of God. In other words, if you are a person of integrity, and you are, if you're a person of integrity, you have strength.

I want you to know as you continue to build your character, and to put on Christ, and to train your life into the image and teachings of

Jesus Christ, I believe that you're going to find a deep dignity and integrity that will carry you all the days of your life. God sees, in spite of your flaws, the good things that you've done. And I know that as you live every day more and more like Jesus Christ, you will find an inner strength that nothing can destroy, and that strength is called integrity.

Remember, when you talk about how strong a building is, what do you call it? The integrity of that building. Your integrity is your ability to get through whatever storm it is you're going through. So remember – at the core of your life is dignity and discipleship.

And so to talk about that, today I'm doing something that is a little audacious. I've been wanting to do this for a long time because a lot of people hate this topic. We're going to start a series on the Ten Commandments. I've heard too many preachers either pass off the Ten Commandments. I've heard many amazing men and women of God sort of say the only reason for the Ten Commandments, or the only reason for the Sermon on the Mount is simply to show us how sinful we are. I don't believe that. If you've gone here for a long time, I don't think that's why God gave us these commands. I think God gave us these commands because he loves us. The Ten Commandments are an amazing thing.

When you think about the bible in and of itself, Christianity and Judaism are different than other religions because our divine text came through people. We believe that the spirit of God, the Ruach Elohim, came into prophets and came into different people, and through

inspiration, they wrote the infallible perfect word of God. But most other texts from other religions is kind of like the heavens opened and a literal book came down. So that's, in a way, what makes our sacred text a little different.

So for us, as Christians and Jews, we have to weigh language and culture and things like this, except for a couple of things. One is all the sermons of Jesus Christ, and the other is the Ten Commandments. There might be other parts that I'm not thinking of and I'm sure I'll get tweeted about this, but as far as I know, the Ten Commandments are the only part of the Old Testament where God literally wrote it by hand, on tablets, handed it to Moses and said "do this." That's pretty sweet.

And all of the word of God is important, but I believe that there's a reason the Ten Commandments has been the most widely accepted moral code in human history; that for over three thousand years, this has been a pillar of civilization. I believe it's a good thing, and this is what I think. I believe at the heart of the Ten Commandments is dignity: the right of every single person to live every day with choice, with liberty, to own property, to make their own decisions, to not be violated, and to be free to live their own life without molestation of other people. I believe at the heart of the Ten Commandments is actually freedom, believe it or not. That the heart of the Ten Commandments is to create a culture of dignity and liberty. And I believe.. think about it: if everyone actually followed the Ten Commandments, and nobody will follow them perfectly,

but if everybody followed them perfectly, I think Dennis Prager made this point when we had our interview, nobody would have to lock their cars. Women would feel safe walking home at night. There would literally be nothing you'd have to worry about.

So the thing we want to be careful about is following the Ten Commandments won't get you into heaven - trusting in Jesus Christ will. But following the Ten Commandments will bring heaven to earth, and that's why I think it's important. The more we believe in the Ten Commandments and live them out as a society, the more free, full and life-giving our society will become. The Ten Commandments must be at the heart of our culture.

I believe the Ten Commandments, very simply, are this: its ten ways to basically be a decent person. It's not going to make you perfect. But can we start there? Just how do we treat one another decently? And that's why I think it's so foundational and so important. And we're going to spend some time knowing these Ten Commandments.

So, I remember when I was living in Oklahoma, I believe it was the Oklahoma state senate building. There was a big, you know, there was a big thing because one of these politicians was, and I think rightly, frustrated that they wanted to remove the Ten Commandments from the state building. Some group, I forget who it was, was arguing that it was a violation of the boundary between church and state. And I thought - I think that's silly because I think that the bible and the Ten

Commandments are more than just religion, they're a part of our culture, but that's my own opinion.

Anyway, but it was very funny because there was this politician who was saying 'the Ten Commandments are important. They are the foundation. I live my life by the Ten Commandments. I couldn't go on a date without the Ten Commandments.' And this reporter, she goes, 'okay thank you, senator. What are the Ten Commandments?' And it was so funny because there was about two seconds and I'm sure millions, or whoever was watching, all of us laughed at the same time. You could see the embarrassment and the look on this guys face. He seemed to struggle to find even one. You don't want to lead off with "thou shalt not murder," the most obvious one, you know.

Anyway, and I actually pulled this trick one time, too. You've heard this story before. I was doing a show in L.A. with The Learning Channel and it was with a lot of great people. And most of them were not religious, and they all kind of said 'oh well we're not religious but we follow the Ten Commandments' which I think is silly because the first four commandments are very religious, but aside from that, we were sitting around and they went 'we're not religious, we just live our life by the Ten Commandments.' And so I said 'what are the Ten Commandments?' And so this table of very hip, very wealthy L.A. people started laughing and made a game out of it. Let's see if we can come up with the Ten Commandments. So they came up with two right ones and

three wrong ones. And they're like 'how did we do, pastor Bobby?' 'Well you got two, that's a twenty percent. That's an F. You failed. You actually got negative ten, if I count the other three, so.'

I want the Ten Commandments to be written on your heart. If you're in a small group, the small groups are going to be memorizing the Ten Commandments in order. And I believe that many Christians say I believe in the Ten Commandments, but would struggle to tell you probably more than six of them. So you're probably trying to sort it out in your own mind – in fact, how many can I think of? Thou shalt not commit immorality is not one of them. That's a silly one. So I want to see the Ten Commandments written on your heart.

So let's start! Let's begin. What is the first commandment? Okay! So you may have heard a mumbling because there are two opposing views about what the first commandment is. Almost every Christian tradition has the first commandment as "you shall have no other gods before me." But in Judaism, and I think they count because they wrote the ten.. well God wrote the Ten Commandments, so they gave it to us in the Talmud. And in only our denomination, I believe, the Reformed Church in America, we believe in a different first commandment. Like wait, how can it be different? Because God didn't put numbers on it. He's like here they go. There was no numbers on those tablets. Those numbers were added later in a document called the Talmud. And so later

on in the thirteenth century, Catholics changed the numbers around and most Christians adapted those new numbers.

So they're almost the same, except for one commandment, and that's the first one. So we're going to teach the Jewish way, all right? Is that okay? You don't get to change a Jewish text, all right? You just don't get to do that if you're not a Jew, all right? And I think it's important. I think that Christians have missed out by not endorsing this as the first commandment.

And this is the first commandment: "I am the Lord your God who brought you out of Egypt out of the land of slavery." Now you can see why a lot of Christians changed it, right? Why did they change it? That ain't no command. That's a statement. How is that a command? I believe it is a command. I believe it is a command that basically says this: believe in the God who believes in you. Believe in the God who believes in you! I am a God that is on your side. I am a God that believes in you. I am a God that is for you. You are my people. I am your God. You will not be in slavery but you will go to the Promised Land. I am on your side! Know me! Trust me! Know me! Trust me! Know me! Trust me. If we don't get this one right, the other nine won't work because what we'll be trying to do is simply doing morals we don't want to do that doesn't feel good. If you start with this is the first commandment, you believe that the things that you're learning are for the purpose of giving me the fullest, richest life possible. That's good. At the heart of "I am the Lord your God who

brought you out of the land of slavery” is this – I’m on your side. Know me and trust me.

Maybe today you’re watching and you just think.. or you’re here in the church and just think God hasn’t been on my side, or God’s not on my side. He is. And that doesn’t mean life isn’t hard, it doesn’t mean you won’t go through challenges. It doesn’t mean you won’t be stretched. It doesn’t mean you won’t get sick. It doesn’t mean you won’t face battles, but it does mean this: God will carry you through. He will carry you out of slavery and he will bring it to your Promised Land. Have faith and don’t give up on him.

In the Torah, so many of these people who were brought out of slavery and are wandering through the desert towards the Promised Land, for years and years and years, moaned and complained to Moses bring us back to Egypt. We want to go back to slavery. And that is the temptation of living in the in-between. Maybe you’re there today. Maybe you’re in that wilderness and you’re waiting to get to your Promised Land, and sometimes you think I’m just going back to slavery. I’m just going to go back. I just want to go back. And God is saying no. Not only are you not going back, you don’t have a choice. I’m not letting you go back to slavery. I am going to carry you kicking and screaming to the Promised Land. And that’s very good news, isn’t it. I believe that with all my heart because in spite of all my flaws and all of my sin, God has

blessed us and carried through every storm, and he will carry you, too. God is on your side. So today, believe in the God who believes in you.

So the first thing is this: the first aspect of this commandment is a command to know and to trust that God is on your side and he is. And I think, and this is my own personal commentary, but Bobby Schuller thinks the second command is really that everyone deserves dignity, and that everyone deserves liberty. I think this is a command about the awfulness of slavery. Slavery has been so common in history. In our modern era, much of it has been wiped out, but actually there are more slaves today than there have ever been in history. And there is nothing more degrading and dehumanizing. In other words, there's nothing more opposite of liberty and opposite of dignity than slavery. God hates slavery because God loves people, and because God gave us choice. God gave you will, choice, decision. God gave you the power to lead your own life, and people want to take that away. They do. People want to take that away to use you, to make you, and God's not going to allow that to happen.

There's a sort of deeper meaning here, too. Many of us have found ourselves enslaved by this and that. Enslaved by poverty, enslaved by lack, enslaved by sin, addiction, enslaved by the need to prove yourself, enslaved by depression or anxiety. Look, God doesn't want you enslaved. In Jesus' name, he's going to break every chain in your life. He's going to break every chain in your life. He is a good God, you can trust him, and

he loves you. He's on your side. He's going to carry you through to the Promised Land. That's a promise. And it's a command. "I am the Lord your God who brought you out of Egypt out of the land of slavery." You ain't going back. You are not going back to Egypt. You are not going back to slavery. You will enter the Promised Land and its going to mean you're going to have to cross some rivers, and cross some deserts, and slay some giants, but we're going to get there together. We're going to do this. That's what the first commandment is about, and it's very hopeful, don't you agree?

So I believe at the heart of the Ten Commandments and at the word of God in general, and that living a life of character, integrity, a moral life, I believe that living for God is the best place to be. I just believe that being in obedience to God's word is the best, fullest, most fun, enriched place you can live your life. I know God. God created fun. God is the most joyful person in the universe. He's also the smartest person in the universe and he is on your side, and he has given us this gift how to live the richest, most exciting, amazing life possible for our whole life instead of just for a mere moment. That's pretty cool, isn't it.

Society seems to want to give you a choice. Sometimes we also make this choice on our own accord, but society seems to want to give you this choice. You have a choice between a good life, that is a moral life, and a full life. You have a choice between a moral life and a full life. Which do you choose? And that is a lie. I have lived in sin long enough to

know that a sinful life is not a full life. To know that a life without boundaries, without morals, without integrity, a life of hidden-ness, a life of fakeness, a life of mask wearing, a life of shame is not a full life to live. If I've learned anything it's that living a vulnerable life, warts and all, in the grace of Jesus Christ, striving for righteousness, growing in my Christ likeness is the best place to live. To live every moment with the faith and confidence that comes with the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

Society says what do you want – goodness or fullness? God says you can have goodness and fullness. In fact, the only way to be good is to be filled up, and the only way to be filled up is to be good. That's the kingdom of God. You don't listen to that. You don't listen to that voice. You know that God wants you to have a rich full life, so don't forget it. Remember, when the time comes that you have to make some of those difficult choices, remember choose what is good, choose what is right, because integrity is your strength, but it's also going to be your joy. It will be the thing that you'll look back and say thank you, God, that I did the right thing.

I think so much of life is sort of like having a battery pack. It's like so much of life is about energy. How many times do we not really thrive in life because we're just simply out of energy, especially if you've got little kids. Especially if you got little kids. Hannah? Julianna? If you got little kids. That battery is empty. But there are other things, like in general, I think we can train ourselves to have more energy. And I'm

surprised to see how many people that have very little responsibility are constantly exhausted. I think that there is something going on, and I think science even proves this, under the surface that your soul is a bit like an I-phone battery. And you know how like on a computer or any kind of phone, if you got a bunch of programs running, all of a sudden that battery just starts going empty. You're like why is my battery going empty so fast? I don't understand.

And I think many of us have a lot of stuff going on under the surface that every day is draining just a little bit of that battery. That we're finishing each day wondering why am I completely out of energy. And there are a lot of reasons for this, but I think one of them is that we live our life without boundaries, and without rules. We don't say no to things, we get caught up in stuff we shouldn't get caught up in. And I think another reason is we don't feel safe to be vulnerable and honest and to drill down deep.

I have seen people who live their life without rules and without boundaries, and they are exhausted and they are sick. If you have ever been a young person, you probably know what that's like. You probably know what it's like to live a life completely without boundaries or rules. I believe that rules, as long as you don't become a legalist, having a rule for a life or a way of life actually gives you freedom. That's for sure true in any nation state. I'm constantly surprised that as a nation or many nations, they will create all of these laws without working on the moral

heart of the people who are supposed to obey the law. If you see anything, it doesn't matter what your political laws are. If you don't have a moral compass of the people behind those laws, nobody's going to follow them.

Having rules, in other words, having a moral compass or having a sense of what is right and wrong actually gives you freedom. It really does. And actually, living a life without rules is not really a fun life. It's like a game without rules. You ever try to play a game without rules? It's not fun. I play games with my kids all the time, and I hate it because there's no rules. It's so boring. You win, I win, we all win. It's all about having fun. It's not about having fun, it's about winning. Winning is fun! Losing is not fun. Losing teaches me I want to fun by winning. No, and just imagine you and a bunch of friends go out onto a soccer field with a ball and you decide everybody's just going to make up their own rules. Is that fun? You having a good time? Wacky scores, wacky boundaries, who knows. And life is like that.

A life with rules, a life with boundaries, a life with integrity, a life of a moral compass is actually a fun life. It's actually a life that gives you structure, a life that gives you freedom. And so allow me to be the lone voice in the wilderness in an age of moral flexibility, to just simply say that rules are good and that legalism is bad, but so is a total lack of moral accountability. You got to find something in the middle.

And that's why you are so valuable to the world. That you are the type of person that finds yourself not like the Pharisee where I'm completely bogged down with legalism, but not like the Sadducee who says there's no moral code and nothing matters. You're like Christ, right in the middle. You know that it's about the spirit of the law, and that the purpose of the law and the purpose of God's word is to create freedom and to create liberty and to give life and to create a full life. That is you.

I want to convince you that studying the word of God and being a person of integrity is the fullest, richest life you can live. You just have to understand it right. And can I just throw in one little bonus? I believe there is actually a reward for those who seek righteousness. I believe there is a material today kind of reward. I asked the question literally. I thought it before but I'm like is this in the word of God?

A few weeks ago, I began to study to just see if there is, in the bible, a correlation between righteousness and blessing. And there are so many passages on it. I could literally just go all day reading the passages. Want me to read a couple of them? How about Deuteronomy 28, the most famous. He says, "All of these blessings will come on you and accompany you if you obey the Lord your God. You'll be blessed in the city and blessed in the country. The fruit of your womb will be blessed and the crops of your land, and the young of your livestock, the calves of your herds and the lambs of your flocks. Your basket and your kneading trough will be blessed. You will be blessed when you come in.

You will be blessed when you go out. The Lord will open the heavens, the storehouse of his bounty to send rain on your land in the season and bless all of the work of your hands. You will lend to many nations, but will borrow from none. The Lord will make you the head and not the tail. If you pay attention to the commands that the Lord your God is giving you this day and carefully follow them, you will always be at the top and never at the bottom. Do not turn aside from any of the commands I give you today to the right or to the left, following other gods or serving them.” Is that pretty clear? Whoa!

Now I don't want to make a formula out of this. I know there was lots of time when the righteous suffer and struggle, but man it seems to be pretty clear that the prayer of a righteous man avails much. That he who walks in righteousness will be wealthy and wise. I mean the passages just continue to go on and on; that there is some actual blessing for those who seek after righteousness. Even in the Sermon on the Mount Jesus talks.. he says you guys always worry what are we going to eat, what are we going to wear, what are we going to do. You worry about all these things that pagans worry about, and then he says but seek first the kingdom and.. his what? His righteousness. And then what'll happen? And all those things will be added to you. You think he's talking about heavenly blessing there? Maybe, but he specifically is talking about clothes, money, health, I mean he's talking about real things today.

So I just want to throw this out there. I know, everybody's like uh oh, you know laser.. you know.. sword eyes. Are you saying that there's an actual material benefit blessing for those who seek after righteousness? Let me just clear the air. Yes! I am! Because the word of God says it and I don't see any way around it. And though I can't always explain some of the in's and out's of it, I believe. And I don't think it means God rewards perfect people, I think it means he regards those, as Jesus said, who seek after his kingdom and his righteousness. If your heart is geared, you're going to make mistakes, you're going to have flaws and the grace of Jesus Christ is there for you. But if you seek after him, I believe you will be blessed. And not just materially blessed, I think you'll have the fullness of life that is made available in the kingdom of God.

I think today I just can't finish today without giving you the opportunity to make a decision. That's really the problem. Many of us, we hear things like this, we think things like this, and we leave and then we go and get nachos, and we go and watch football, and you just kind of forget. And I just feel like I need to put it to you. When Joshua was entering the Promised Land, he said to the people many of you have been worshipping idols and you've also been worshipping God. You've been doing both. But the Lord says to you, you have to make a decision. You have to make a decision. You can't live for one and the other, you must make a decision, and then Joshua famously says as for me and my house we will serve the Lord.

And today I'm calling you. I'm going to actually offer you the chance to come down right now and become a happy and whole student of Jesus. We don't do this much here, but I'm actually going to challenge you to stand up in front of everybody and walk down here. Maybe you've fallen behind and you need to get your life right, or maybe today you need to make a decision for God. I just want to say this to you: nothing would bring more joy to my heart and to the heart of God, and to the people that are sitting with you than for you to come down and to receive Christ.

And so today, I'm asking you to make a decision. Many of you have already made this decision. That's fine. But for some of you, you've been teetering. You've been riding the fence and you need to make a choice. Normally pastors say I want every head down, every eye closed. I want every head up, chin up, everybody looking around. Looking around, look behind you, look at your neighbor. I think that becoming a Christian begins with an act of courage. It means that not sneaking silently and quietly while nobody really can hold me. I want everybody. I want a thousand people to see you stand and say I'm making a decision. And if not, I don't care. I want you to do something brave.

And so in this moment, I'm going to ask even now, if you want to receive Christ, just stand up where you are and just walk down right here, right now. And I'm going to ask the organ plays to make the silence not so awkward. Thank you, Zeljko.

The first one's always the bravest. You know the first one's always the bravest but I think that counts. Thank you. If you want to receive Christ, thank you. And just come down here, friends. Just come right here. Right here. Thanks, come down. Look, if you're not sure, just come down anyway. Like it's not going to hurt you. Like are you worried about your reputation? Maybe you're thinking like oh well my family and friends are here, I'll do it later. What if there is no later? Life is short and life is unpredictable. And there will be a time in your life where you may remember this as the most important decision you ever made. And you say well I'll stand up for God on my own. If you can't stand up for God in church, how are you going to stand up for God in the world? How you going to do that?

So Lord is here. Don't feel shame. Feel joy. Feel life. Come and receive the goodness of the Lord Jesus Christ. Come receive eternal life. If you're not sure, just come. It's okay. Maybe you're going to leave here and you're going to say I wish I would have done it. Just call the church or come back to the second service. You know maybe I'll tell you to come down.

Thank you, friends, for coming down and for making a public decision that I want to.. wherever you are. I want to make a decision to follow Christ, and to walk as a Christian. And so I'm going to ask you to pray this with me. And friends, would you pray with me? And if you're watching on TV join us in this prayer. This is available to everyone.

Maybe hold your hands out like this, church, towards these people and everybody whose here, do this as a sign of receiving like this. You should be receiving goodness. You're going to receive a blessing and joy and life and forgiveness.

So say this after me: Jesus Christ, I trust in you. Fill me with your spirit. Forgive me of my sins. Teach me your ways and write my name in the Lamb's book of life. I trust you and love you in Jesus' name I pray, amen. And Lord, I pray a special blessing over these people. If there's those who've made a decision in their chairs or at home, I pray in Jesus name that everything would change in their life for the better. That whatever they're going through, Lord, I pray in Jesus name that sin, that addiction, that worry, that fear, that anxiety, that sickness, Lord these things would be removed from them. That is a part of the curse. And Lord the cross has taken all those things from us and given us life. And so I pray that and receive that life and receive the Holy Spirit in Jesus' name, amen.