

# **You Are Not What Others Say**

*By Bobby Schuller*

Well we're in the middle of a series on that creed we just said, and in particular on a book I just wrote on that creed, and really do want to encourage you to get that book. I know its shameless self-promotion. But it really is a book and a message that I believe in.

And this is the promise I will give you. This book is for you if you need more energy in your life. Many of us, our souls and our minds, they're kind of like computer batteries where when we have too many programs running underneath the surface, the battery runs out. And we don't recognize how much thought and energy is going into managing our reputation or hustling for worthiness.

And so this book will teach you what it means to move in the direction of letting go of some of those things. And the thing you find has a deeper sense of peace, joy and energy. So I want to encourage you to get that book. It would mean the world to me if you did. But of all the parts that we're going to talk, today is the one that in terms of wanting to accomplish things in your life, in terms of wanting real achievement, no matter how old or young you are, you can do amazing things, especially if you can let go of one thing: let go of reputation management. You let go of focusing on what people think about you.

Now of course you want to be respectful, and you need to be a moral person, but in the end, we should live a life geared towards

honoring God, and worrying about what God thinks about us, and not what people think. This is a real trap for most of us, that when we're trying to do things that we feel like we're called to do, or just in living a life, just the way that we constantly apologize when we don't need to. Things like that. That it drains our battery because we're constantly worried about what people think.

That's why the famous quote from Elbert Hubbard, he said this: "To avoid criticism, say nothing, do nothing, be nothing." And that's the only way. And even then, you'll get some. And you might invert that quote. If you're going to be somebody, if you're going to do something, if you're going to lead and you're going to speak, you're going to get criticisms. And you're going to get a lot of it, and that's okay. You're terrific, and you have everything you need to endure the yammering's and the criticisms of people you don't even care about or respect.

Our souls and our lives are very much, like I said, like batteries where we spend so much time worried about what people think about us. Oddly, most of the time those people are not in our family or close friends. These are strangers, colleagues at work, people at the grocery store, let it go. If you're anything like me, if maybe some guy in a car flipped you off, somebody you never knew or care, or didn't even know his name, or somebody crossed you at the bank, or somebody cut in line and then turned and said something snarky, you might have been up all

night thinking about a great response. You thought of the perfect line. It's too late, he's already gone. Tossing and turning.

But in truth, if no wound was received, no wound was caused. We can let it go! We don't have to think about it, and we don't have to worry about what people we barely know anything about us, but you don't have to worry about what they think about us or what they say about us. The truth always comes out.

Hey, this is not to say that words are not powerful or those things don't affect us. They affect all of us. Doesn't matter how little you know someone, if they say something to you positive or negative, it's going to affect you, usually. Words have power. Heck, God created the whole universe using words. DNA is, in a way, kind of a set of words that describe a life. Anytime anything was made, words preceded that thing which was made. Someone, once upon a time, looked at a plot of land where this church is, and said let's build a church there. So everything that exists, good and evil almost always began with somebody speaking something aloud, an idea, spoken to a group of people, spoken over people.

And then words even have a sort of spiritual power to them, as well, don't they? I mean people have always known this across every religion and world view. That's why you have things like taboos and things you're not supposed to say in baseball games. Man, every time an

Angel's pitcher is doing well, Chad has to say oh he's gone six innings without a hit. And I want to hit Chad.

So we have these things, these ways in which we understand whether a superstition or very often it's true, that words have power. I mean you think of even Balaam, who was not really a godly man. Balaam was an enchanter who was hired as weird as this sounds, to not a Jewish man, he was hired to speak curses over armies. And when he was hired to curse the Jewish people, God prohibited it. Told Balaam don't do it. Why? Well apparently, even if you're not a man of God, your words have power. Words have power.

And all this is to say, it's a big deal when people speak over you. It's a big deal when someone speaks a blessing over you. It's a big deal when one of the pastors here speaks a benediction over you. That's a good thing to receive. And also, it's a big deal when someone curses you. When someone puts you down. When someone says you're worthless. When someone says you've done nothing with your life and you're going nowhere. You don't belong. And all these things that you've heard, maybe when you're a child. And maybe the people who said those things, they've been gone for a long time, but you still hear these words in your soul and in your heart.

I know words have power, but I want to say something: life is too good to spend even one second being offended. Life is too good, isn't it? Life is too good to spend one-minute worrying about what somebody said

about me. Hey guys, you live in Southern California. You're in a church full of terrific people, good friends, you got to hear amazing music today, and by the way, you look terrific. This is a good-looking church. You've got a lot of good in your life, and life is way, way, way too awesome, beautiful and good to spend one second worrying about what somebody said about you. Listen to what the Lord says about you. He says you are the beloved. You are chosen. You are called. You are above and not beneath. You are blessed. No curse spoken over you will prosper. You have a hedge of protection around you. The angels and the power of God is working on your behalf. These are the promises of God, the words of God. Put faith in them. Put faith in the voice of the beloved that says you're not what you do, you're not what you've done, you're not what you have, you're not what you lost, and you're certainly not what people say about you. You're the beloved. Live from that place and watch the amazing things that you'll accomplish with your life. When you pursue what God's calling you to do rather than feeling guilty about people pleasing or trying to manage the way people see you. That's a trap and you'll never be happy if you spend your life doing that.

So the thing we need to do is focus on the voice of the beloved, who just continually sings over us, my beloved son, my beloved daughter, I love you. I love you. Listen to my voice. Listen to my voice. Grace always leads to holiness in life; shame always leads to sin. Grace always leads to

life, shame always leads to sin. It is fact. It is a rule in the universe and it is just. Believe in the grace that God has for you.

In Matthew chapter 3, there's a great story where Jesus is baptized. You ever wondered if Jesus never sinned, why did He need to be baptized. Was He getting saved? And this alone, the fact that we don't understand why Jesus was baptized, I think is a criticism of our theology. That very clearly, the reason Jesus got baptized was to receive grace from the Father. And if you can't understand why Jesus needs grace, it's time to study grace again. Grace doesn't mean mercy. Grace means favor. Grace means God's abundant love, power and energy; an overflowing of His very self that is abounding in mercy that covers all of our sins, but it does more than that. It fuels us. Dallas Willard says that grace is to a Christian like jet fuel is to a jet.

In fact, disciples need grace more than sinners do. And even if you were able to live a week of perfect love and live completely by the spirit, that person also needs more grace than anyone else. The more you're called to do, the more grace you need. Grace is fuel, grace is energy, grace is God's life and love. It's His favor, it's His abundance, it's an overflowing of His very self. And that's why Jesus, the Son, when He was baptized, was receiving grace from God, receiving His power from God, and we see it happen. He was also doing it to fulfill the law, and He says that.

It was then it says, Matthew chapter 3 verse 13, “then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to be baptized by John. But John tried to deter Him.” I would, too. Wouldn’t you want to be baptized by Jesus? Wouldn’t that be cool? Actually, you are baptized by Jesus. “John tried to deter Him saying ‘I need to be baptized by you. And do you come to me?’ Jesus replied, ‘let it be so now. It is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness.’ Then He,” that is John, “permitted him. As soon as Jesus was baptized, He went up out of the water and at that moment, heaven was opened and He saw,” everyone say was it they saw or He saw? “He saw, Jesus saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on Him, and a voice from heaven that said ‘this is my Son whom I love. With Him I am well pleased.’”

One of the first things I want you to see here is, and I think there’s evidence to show in this passage, actually, that although we often think a crowd sort of heard a voice or something, it actually seems to say that only Jesus saw this, and only Jesus heard this voice. That He alone, that it was like He was able to see the Holy Spirit come down on Him in His baptism and just remind Him of the love. You know Jesus would have been in His early 30’s when this happened. He didn’t accomplish anything really notable at all.

In fact, I remember, when I was in Israel not long ago, and I was walking in this area called the Decapolis near Nazareth, and I would visit Nazareth in the areas around it, there are these Roman ruins. Jesus is

often described as a carpenter, but He may not have been a carpenter because the Greek word there can be more translated as builder. He probably worked with stone. And so, when you go to these theaters and you see these buildings, you see that Jesus might have built this building with Joseph, as an apprentice. And for all those years was just faithful without any great accomplishment whatsoever.

And now he's beginning a three-year ministry that will culminate in the cross and resurrection, He needs grace to do that. He needs to hear the voice that says you are my beloved. When all those people call you a heretic, when all those people say you're sent from the devil, when those people lie about you and slander you, and they beat you, you need to remember this one thing, my Son, you're my beloved. You're my beloved. You're mine. You belong to me.

And notice the Father was pleased with Jesus before He accomplished anything notable. No miracles yet, nothing crazy, just Jesus and He was pleasing to the Father. You know God takes pleasure in you, not because of your accomplishments or your accolades; He just likes you because you're His kid.

Some of you like your kids. God likes you more than you like your kids. He loves you more than you love your kids. You forgive your kids when they mess up? You stop loving your kids when they mess up? Even though we're fallen. Mothers out there, you stop loving your sons or your daughters when they mess up? God's love is greater than any mother,

any father, any friend, and it never fails. He loves you and He's saying good things about you, even though other people might have some negative things they're saying.

I'm teaching my kids to be respectful, and don't ever be offensive to people as best you can. But are we making a mistake? Are we teaching people to be offended instead of being resilient? This is a real question and it matters because no matter who you are, if you have an opinion, you have an enemy. No matter who you are, if you're doing something noteworthy, you have a competitor. You have someone who disagrees with you. You have plenty of people who want to lie and gossip about you. Oh, and by the way, if you're doing things for the kingdom of God, you're now an enemy in the kingdom of darkness. And the kingdom of darkness, above all, is founded on deception. It is the number one tool the enemy uses to bring down people. If you're going to do things for God, you're going to be lied about. You're going to be slandered. You're going to be mistreated. That's kit and caboodle, friends. Its kit and caboodle.

So, we need to teach people, and we need to live ourselves recognizing almost in a stoic way, that people are offensive and always will be offensive, and there's nothing we can really do about it for them. But there's something we can do and that is to be resilient. To let it go and to become the kind of person that just doesn't hinge on praise and doesn't hinge on criticism. We just let them both go, and we listen to one

voice, the voice of the Father who says you are beloved. You can do anything you set your mind to, you can achieve any goal, you can do anything. Be creative. Break the rules! Do what God's called you to do and don't worry about people putting you down. Always do what's right, always do what's moral, but never fall into this trap of people pleasing.

We can become a resilient people. We can become like that lighthouse that you always see that's like this light beacon, and it's like the waves smashes against it, and water goes everywhere, but nothing happens in the light. That's you! That is, you! Shining a light, helping people, saving people even, and never worrying about what others say about you. You just let it go.

I had to learn this early on, that criticism is a part of achievement. If you're achieving anything, prepare to be betrayed. Prepare to be offended. Prepare to be slandered. And don't say I didn't tell you so. It will happen. And that's a part of leading and influencing others. Its maturity not to shout and scream and say they shouldn't be offensive to me, but rather recognize that criticism is training. I'm just going to let that simmer for a second. Criticism is training. It's a temporary opportunity for a permanent gift.

Sam Chand, that's why he said that "your ability to lead is equal to your tolerance for pain." Because leading is bleeding. When you lead, people are going to hurt you and attack you and it's going to just make you stronger, amen? You're going to get stronger and stronger.

This totally happened to me as a pastor. I remember when Hannah and I, I was a worship leader and I worked with youth, but I never got any criticism at all until I became a senior pastor of a little church in Orange, and I remember just getting so much.. I felt like so much criticism. Looking back, I'm like I was a wimp. I got, man.

And I remember there were times, for example, like we would, you know me, one: when I speak, I don't always have a filter. I'm a risk taker. I'm a taboo breaker. I remember when we had our church, and we wanted to make fliers to invite people to our church. I said we can't make fliers, people hate fliers. Going to make them hate our church. And I said what we need to do instead is make matchbooks. We need to make matchbooks. They're the same price as fliers, believe it or not, and everybody loves matchbooks. Every time you go a hotel, and they have that little basket of matchbooks, who doesn't take one. It's like I don't want to lose money. It's like right there.

And so we made these matchbooks with Jesus' face on them and a little thing when you open it that talked about our church. And people said you're encouraging smoking. I mean you should have seen, it's like a third of our church was just like 'well, I never.' And I'm like guys, smoking's not even a sin, which is one thing. But I'm like look, people will be excited to get matchbooks every time they want to light a candle. Anyway.

And I remember, I would get hung up on these little things that really weren't a big deal, but what I didn't know is God was training me for greater things.

And that's when it happened. When Hannah and I went on television with the Hour of Power, we were not prepared for the slander, personal attacks against me and my family members, super inappropriate things about women and children. I mean this is stuff like, you know the internet, and seeing this just really wasn't ready for that. There was one website in particular that was dedicated to just gossiping and slandering about us and our family. And I just remember thinking, this is crazy, the stuff that they're posting it's not even true, it doesn't make any sense. And it was really, really bothering me a lot, and the more our reach expanded, the more this kind of thing was happening, and it was keeping me up at night. How dare they say that about my wife. How dare they say that about my kids.

So I remember one day when Hannah and I were at Universal City, and I was stewing about this, and wasn't even praying. I forgot that God was even around. I was just angry, and I was mad and upset. And I saw this kid, and he had this shirt on, he was walking, it was a black shirt with white letters, and it said "if you ain't got haters, you ain't doing expletive." We'll just say expletive.

And it was so funny because when I saw that shirt, it was like the Lord used it to speak to me! Somehow that shirt really.. shirt with an "r",

that shirt, it got through to me. It got through. And that was when the Lord just said it as plain as day, its training. You want to do great things with your life? Prepare to be lied about. Prepare to be slandered and gossiped and put down. Your ability to lead is equal to your tolerance for pain. And that's why you need to be a resilient person. You've got stuff to do. You got stuff to do. You can't sit around being offended all day and being worried about people say about you, you've got things to do, and they're God's things, no one else' things, so do them, amen? You're going to do great.

And that's why we realize, I just was like all right, Lord, give me.. I want ten websites! One of these days, I'm going to be on the cover of some newspaper and it's going to be a total lie, and that's going to be awesome! I can't wait. So we build into, no, I'm just being silly. But it's good to view things that way. People aren't going to criticize you if you're not doing anything. To avoid criticism, say nothing, do nothing, be nothing.

I would even say if you don't have critics, it's time to get some. Really. If you have zero critics in your life, pray about that. Really. Take some time and think about why that is. I'm sure you're a nice person. But Jesus teaches us that blessed are you, blessed are you, blessed are you when people insult you and persecute you and falsely say evil against you. Why? Cause you're a change agent. And you're doing things. You're making an impact, and I'm proud of you.

The other way that this inverts is also when we really look to try and get all the credit and all the thanks, too, for the stuff we've legitimately done. This can happen on a small level, maybe you're caring for somebody in your family and they never thanked you. Maybe your job, your boss never thanks you, and he always takes the credit. And maybe you're a leader and you have a team but you struggle to sort of take the glory. Always give glory to other people. Pass on the credit to the people in your team, if you're leading. And when leaders and groups that you're a part of don't give you credit, let it go. God sees what you're doing. God sees what you're doing and actually, did you know, principles in the kingdom of God say that the good things you do in secret that nobody notices builds up favor in your life. It actually begins to spiritually open doors. I don't know about you, if I had to choose between God seeing the good thing I do and man seeing the good thing I do, I want God to see it because He can open some doors. He can make it rain. Am I right? He can bring opportunity and life. And faith is just trusting that that's the case.

And so, let go of needing credit. That's why Harry Truman said "it's amazing what you can accomplish if you don't care who gets the credit." Stop living for people's credit and glory and approval. Live according to the voice of God and where He's going and what He's doing. Whatever God is doing, its already blessed, so do that thing.

And when we learn to be resilient and not be offended all the time and just let it roll off our back, we become stronger and tougher. We get a sense of grit. And we get more energy and most of all, it allows us to discern the difference between insult and correction, and this is important. This is my last thought.

Many of us, because we're so offended, we don't have the toughness to take legitimate feedback from people who love us, people who care about us. We get defensive and we get our feelings hurt, but very often our friends are just trying to help us go farther and do better. That's why Proverbs 9:8 and 9 says "instruct the wise and they will be wiser still. Teach the righteous and they will add to their learning."

Friends, we can let go of what people say about us. We can let go of being offended. When somebody flips you off, you just say, it's just I'm such a good driver. When somebody gossips about you, the truth will always come to light. It always does. And if people are watching, responding to something like that with quiet dignity and an inner strength, that's alluring. Gentleness, forgiveness. Jesus teaches us forgive our offenses, we should pray to God, as we forgive people who have offended us. Our first response when we get offended should be forgiveness, mercy, quiet, and at the greatest, the best is to be just strong. Life is too good, life is too good to spend even one minute being offended. Enjoy your life and pursue what God's calling you to do. Amen?

Lord, we love you. Lord, we thank you so much that you've called us in this place, and we can let go of what others say about us and live a life for you. We don't have to people please, we're going to live our life for you and trust, God, that what you say is good and where you're taking us is good. We love you, in Jesus' name we pray, amen.