

Like a Lighthouse

By Bobby Schuller

God's vision for your life, Jesus says, is that you would be like a city on a hill; that you could not be hidden. A city on a hill that is that people would look to you to find safety, shelter, nourishment and life, and that's what people see when they see you.

The real estate market is a little crazy, can I get an amen from all the millennials? It is a little crazy. Millennials are just waiting like crazy for this real estate market to crash. One of these days, we're going to own our own. Hannah and I have been looking for a house. The current house that we're in is very small and our family is growing, I mean like stature wise. Hannah's not pregnant. Are you? Okay, let me know. Maybe? Stranger things have happened.

But as our family grows, we kind of want a bigger home. Our house is kind of like a townhouse. Our downstairs is sort of one room, it's like a kitchen/living room type thing, and then we got our living quarters upstairs. So we've been looking for a house for like two years. Meanwhile, rents and prices just keep going up. So last Monday, which is our date day, we wanted to visit this neighborhood near the church, I think it's called Turtle Rock, maybe or something like that.

Anyway, the area that we saw a house for rent was gated. This is very common here in California, lots of neighborhoods are gated. And we got there, and we just wanted to drive around, and the guard at the gate, I was like 'hey, we just want to look around the neighborhood. We won't get out of the car. Can we drive around?' And he was like no. And I'm used to sweet talking my way, and so I tried a second round – like, well you know blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. And then the second time he said no, he said no in a way like no and if I catch you trespassing, I'll call the police kind of no. Like don't even try, buddy. He knows a troublemaker when he sees one.

So Hannah and I left, and of course being who I am, I looked on my phone and found on Google maps that there was actually a hiking trail that went around the back of the neighborhood, and you can see there's no gate or anything, you just walk right into the neighborhood. So I took Hannah down to the trailhead and I was like let's look. I was like I think it's about a mile, we got our tennis shoes on. It's a nice, cool day. Why don't we just walk up this hill around the back and then we can see the neighborhood. Oh, she says it was starting to rain. I don't even remember that.

Anyway, the answer was also no, and don't even try, bud. I know you'll try and sweet talk your way into this one. So we wrapped it up. And later that week, I was kind of in the neighborhood, and I wasn't

ready for this, but I was like I'm going to go over there and just walk up into that neighborhood and see it real quick.

So I pulled up, and at the time, I had no hat, which for me is a big.. I like to hike, I enjoy things, but no hat. It was one of those weird days in late fall where it was going to be 90 degrees, full sun. I had some sunscreen, which was good, but I'd never used it before. I'd just bought it from Target. And its mineral sunscreen. Has anybody ever used this before? Mineral sunscreen is the kind of sunscreen that makes you look like a ghost. When you put it on, you're painting yourself pure white. And there's no amount of rubbing you can do, so you look weird. And I also think I dislocated or maybe even broke a rib a few weeks ago, and last Sunday, I don't know if you could tell I was preaching through it. I was kind of struggling a little bit. But I also had this going for me and some other things. I didn't have any water and I didn't realize my cell phone wasn't going to work, and I was like it's just around this bend.

So I go on this trail hike, and it just keeps going further and further. The hike is in like a very desert kind of.. it's like tumbleweeds and rocks and I keep going, and I have a tracker, the GPS that's telling me how far. I get almost two miles in, and I haven't even started going up the hill yet. And I find this one couple and I was like do you know where this neighborhood is? They're like oh yeah, you have to go back around that construction site, you can't go through, you have to go up the thing

and there's some switchbacks, but you're almost there. And I was like okay.

And then I get to that trailhead, and I start going up the switchbacks. I'm now like three miles in, dying, I'm under the one tree that exists in the universe in this whole world, I'm like dying. And I think I'm almost there and there's this like girl on an off roading mountain bike. She's going up. And I'm always like cheering people, so she's going by, I'm like good job! Good job! You're almost there. And she goes no I'm not! And I thought to myself, well if she's not, then I'm not! Because it looked like it was right there. It was six point eight miles when I got there, y'all. Six point eight miles of dying. I'm like soaked. And by the way when I got to the neighborhood, I was like oh, it's okay.

But what I will say is I was thinking about this message and about what Jesus says is a city on a hill, and there really was a feeling when I got to the neighborhood that I was like finally! Here it is! Here's this thing I've been trying to find.

And in the ancient world, we often forget this idea, especially in a desert place like the near east and the bronze age and in the Roman period, how important these tels were, these cities on a hill, that in a wasteland of desert and robbers and tumbleweeds and all sorts of stuff, when you see that city and you're almost there, when you enter through the gates and you know you're going to have a bed and some water and some food, you're going to be safe, you don't have to worry at your

campsite about being robbed, there's something really special about a city on a hill.

And this is the metaphor that God gives for you. I want you to be a city on a hill for people, that when they see you, they don't go oh, I'm going around that city. Or like, oh no, walk on eggshells around him or her. That when they see you, they see a safe place, a place full of light and life and water and food, a place where I can go to rest. A place I don't have to worry about being taken advantage of – a safe place. See a light, a light, a gift, a gift to your neighbor.

This is what Jesus has for us is that we'd be a city on a hill, like a lighthouse to a ship that guides the way, like a tower that protects us from the storm. He also says like salt. Salt is like a refrigerator. Nourishment. Just think wherever there's salt, there's food because you can store the food. You are nourishment to your neighbor.

So Jesus teaches this a lot, this idea of not just.. we talked about kindness today, but just intentional good will towards my neighbor. That's the inner life that's happening for a disciple for a neighbor. And at the end of the sermon on the mount, actually, when Jesus gives all these ways in which we can be light and life and salt, He says these famous words: do unto others as you have them do unto you for this sums up the law and the prophets. Everybody know what that's called? It's called the golden rule, right? The golden rule.

The hundred years before Jesus was preaching and teaching and doing His earthly ministry, there was a development of rabbinic Judaism happening that would emerge as the Talmud and the Mishnah, and a lot of modern orthodox Judaism comes from this period. There were two key teachers that kind of hated each other that were both vying over the future of Judaism and how to teach a Torah.

The first guy was Shammai. The Shammaites were really common in Jesus' day. Many of the pharisees taught that way. Today orthodox Jews reject Shammaites in that way of thinking. But anyway, it was the way. It was a very legalistic way of viewing the Bible and life. It was rules, rules, rules, it was rules before people.

One Gentile came to Shammai and said to him, rabbi, there are a lot of rules in your book. There are six hundred and thirteen Mitzvot - commandments. Things like don't mix cotton and wool and such dietary rules, sabbath rules. It's too much for me to take in. He's like if you can stand on one leg and explain to me all of those very simply, I will convert to Judaism. And you know what Shammai did? True story. He grabbed a hammer and started beating the guy and chased him off. But he didn't give up! The Talmud says that the same Gentile, who just wanted to get an answer, went to Hillel and Hillel also rebukes him. You have no respect for the scriptures. Then he goes but I'll do it. And he stands on one foot and he says, "do not do to others what you wouldn't want them to do to you." What's that sound like? Today we call it the silver rule.

See one of the geniuses of Jesus' teaching is He's pulling both from Jewish and Greek teachings very often, common ideas, and kind of fixing them or improving them or making them better. It was a common saying by the time Jesus was teaching that you would say 'do not do to others what is hateful to you.' Or 'do not do to others what you wouldn't do to yourself.' And do you notice, what is the change that makes it go from silver to gold? It's DO! Do to others what you'd want them to do to you. DO to others. It moves you from being a victim to being an agent. You see when you wake up in the morning with a golden rule mind and golden rule heart, you don't say just don't do what others.. and that's a good thing, right? Don't murder people. Don't steal. But when you have a golden rule, you change it to being actively involved in the lives of people who are hurting in a positive way.

Today, I'm going to do to somebody what I'd want somebody to do for me. I'm going to do it for my spouse. It's so easy to jump to homeless people or to jump to people that are so obviously suffering, but what about your spouse that just wants to spend some time with you. Or what about your best friend that you haven't talked to in a year. Or what about your kids that you might have had a falling out with, or your parents, or your grandparents. And that you decide that for my neighbor today, I'm going to do to them, not necessarily what they deserve or any of that, I'm going to do to them what I would want if I were in their position. I'm going to be merciful and forgiving and kind.

When you have a golden rule heart and a golden rule life, your day is not something that happens to you anymore. See normally when we ask the question 'how was your day,' you describe the things that happened to you. But in a golden rule life if you describe your day, you'd describe the things that you did for others and that is such a better way to live.

My grandpa Schuller was obsessive about this idea. He would never let you say when you left: bye grandpa, have a good day. How would you say if somebody said have a good day, what would you say? You too, have a good day, whatever, right? Whatever, have a good day. He would always go, "no, MAKE it a great day."

There is a way of living life where you decide my day will be the way I make it according to the will that God has put in my heart, and according to the faith I have in His word, that if I love my neighbor, especially my enemy, that it will be a better day than it would have been had I not done that. I'm an agent, not a victim. I will choose today to love my neighbor. Can I just tell you, that's a better way to live. That is a gift. If you want to sum all of this up, Jesus says the whole thing, it's a lot of pages, a lot of Greek and Hebrew in here, you want to sum it up? Love your neighbor. You want to sum it up? Love the Lord with all your heart. Or Jesus just said plainly, do unto others what you'd want them to do to you.

Think about it – if people did this, how much better our schools would be, how much better our teachers would be, how much better our marriages would be, how much better our churches and cities and everything would be if people woke up and not only did it, wouldn't even have to do it perfectly, but even just tried to do it, how much better things would be and I think we can all see a vision of that. But it's not so simple is it. It's simple and it's not simple. It's simple and it's not simple.

I've given to so many couples, I said you know if you want the secret to an amazing, life-giving, awesome, joy-filled marriage that you live to an old age and you die together at the same time holding hands, that kind of movie marriage, you want that? It's so simple. If you were to wake up every day and just ask the question – how can I make this person's life great today, and both people did that every day, the marriage would be unbelievable. No surprises there, right? Nobody's like oh that's a revelation. Everybody knows that would be true. But is it so easy? Is it so easy? Is it so easy to live a golden rule life?

I think that when we get to the golden rule, it's better to look at instead of what to do, it's better to look at the ways in which life and its difficulties and its challenges derail the golden rule life. I think if you're a believer, it comes naturally to you to do unto others what you'd have them do to you. But there are many things, but there are four that stand out in my mind that cause us to mess up the golden rule in a way that it doesn't give us life or give our neighbors life.

The first one that always comes to mind, that ruins every life-giving command or way of God, that ruins every good thing that God wants to do in your life is legalism. Jesus rails against this legalism, Paul rails against it. Not against morality or doing good, but against a way of viewing goodness as a set of rules, as a check box that I fill out. Legalism is a fear-based way of viewing my life. It's a report card pass/fail kind of way of viewing.

Recently in the news, a very sad story, tragic story about Alec Baldwin was shooting a film, a cowboy movie, and somehow a live round made it into a fake gun that was supposed to shoot blanks. This happened back in the 90's, too, to Bruce Lee's son, where he was shot with a live round, and it's always been this weird story surrounded with conspiracy theories. Well anyway, Alec Baldwin had a gun and it's a movie and they're shooting guns, and it had a live round, and when this happened, the DP, a wonderful 42-year-old woman was shot and killed, and then a director was also shot and injured and went to the hospital.

Poor Alec Baldwin, poor families of the injured, I mean it's just an all-around tragedy, nobody really is at fault, I mean I don't know, I don't know much about the story other than when I saw Alec Baldwin's formal statement, we'll just bring it up here real quick. He says "there are no words to convey my shock and sadness regarding the tragic accident that took the life of Halyna Hutchins, a wife mother and deeply admired

colleague of ours. I'm fully cooperating with the police investigation to address how this tragedy occurred."

Now I have been involved in many big production companies. I worked for the Learning Channel. I've been involved with various PR firms, and I've been sued multiple times and I know what is happening here. Alec Baldwin lives in litigious California. He lives in a litigious world where if you are successful and famous, there's always the great possibility you'd be sued. And I actually believe that this man is just torn to pieces but he's not able to convey how he really feels because when something like this happens, because of our legalistic society, you have to get PR people and especially attorneys to formulate a heartfelt statement that if you notice has no admission of guilt and no apology, you see?

This is not a judgement on Alec Baldwin at all. My heart goes out to him and to this woman Halyna and the other guy that was injured. What a horrible thing. But what I'm criticizing here is the way in which a litigious worldview, a legalistic worldview causes people to separate from each other and not truly be themselves.

There's another statement Alec Baldwin made right after it happened. Photographers were there. You know what he said? Four simple words, with tears in his eyes, looking at his hands, "she was my friend." You see that's a real statement. That's what the family needs to

hear. That's what people need to hear. Your heart! And that's what legalism kills.

See God doesn't want us to legalistically obey the golden rule. He wants to give you a new heart that says I love people. That even when I was an enemy of God, He loved me. And even though this person is hard to love, my heart goes for them. I'm for them and not against them. I want to believe in them and not be opposed to them. I want to see their life be a victory and not a failure. And I understand that God's love for me sustains me enough that I can love them right where they're at. See God wants a new heart, not a new set of rules. He wants a heart that loves people. A golden rule heart, not a golden rule list. And that's who you are, someone who can love others. Don't let legalism kill the new heart and new creation that God has given you. Love people right where they're at. Right where they're at.

It is not okay in Jesus' world, it's never okay to will the bad for someone. We'll get to that in just a minute. So legalism kills the golden rule community in a golden rule heart.

The second thing is vain glory. In an age of Instagram, this is also a danger. This was always happening in churches when I grew up. Vain glory means look at my virtue, huh? Look how good I am. Look how well I am at obeying the golden rule. Aren't I great? It's the kind of thing that takes a selfie with homeless people when you're feeding them, or the kind of thing that you sort of actively leave out like your Bible open and

somebody comes in - oh I was just reading the word, sorry, let me put that away. This kind of thing.

There's nothing wrong with leaving your Bible out, and there's nothing wrong with taking a picture with homeless people, it's the heart. Again, it's the heart. Why am I doing this? Am I doing this because I love my neighbor? Am I doing this to show God that I want to live His way? Or am I doing this to be like, hey buddy, hey, check me out. Vain glory will destroy the golden rule life because it's not really about the person you're wanting to help. It's still about you.

Jesus had a great sense of humor. Even comedy that existed 50 years ago is not funny anymore, for most people today. Comedy is always so modern, always changing, so when Jesus actually says in this sermon these things, people probably would have busted up laughing when He said, "don't let your left hand know what your right hand is doing." See all of this legalistic Christians are like okay, I guess I got to just figure out a way to like make my.. it was a joke! It's a joke. Every Bible scholar believed that. Or when He talks about the trumpets, don't be like the hypocrites who.. it's a hilarious joke. We're blowing a trumpet DOO, DOO, DOO, DOO, DOO everybody look! Look, I'm about to give money to the temple! DOO, DOO, DOO, DOO! So again, people would have been like.. Jesus. You ham. All right.

So He's describing something that really happens in all of us, you see? Vain glory finds not trumpet ways, but subtle ways to let other

people know how virtuous I am. As subtly as I can, I'm going to let people know I'm a good person. Okay. We don't need to dwell on it, right?

Number three, and I think this is really common for really good people. Maybe this is you. You are so passionate about helping people. You so want to obey God and live for His way that sometimes you forget that you matter, too, and you let go of your boundaries. This happens a lot. That in your desire to help people, the third thing that derails a golden rule is you just serve people so much, and you love people so much that sometimes those people violate real boundaries to the point where you're actually enabling them; you're actually making it harder for them to be better and do better. You're not helping. And out of a place of fear and pride, or a way of feeling like I'm not worth it, you're not good at setting those boundaries.

I tell pastors all the time, I've pastored small churches and large churches, pastoring small churches is harder. It's harder. Because when you're in a small church, you get no glory or credit or pay. I mean I was a volunteer when we were pastoring our church plant and yet everybody thinks you're lazy. And out of 150 people, all of them want you to do their cousins wedding, and their aunts funeral, and they want you to go to their little brother's baseball game, and by the way, do you have time to talk and have a cup of coffee. And as a pastor, that's the business you're in, that you want to be there for people. But there are certain

people who will judge you or say certain things if you don't always jump to the will call.

And I remember, I had to frame it this way in my mind. There were two people in particular that I had to fire. I didn't fire them in like you're fired, get out of my church. But in my mind, I had to just say in the most loving kind way possible, I'm sorry, I can't meet you today. And I had to actively say it in a way that didn't have an excuse. This is something that was important to me, to not just say I'm sorry I can't go, I have this other thing I'm doing. I had to have enough respect for myself to say I'm sorry I can't make it today, and I love you and I hope you have a great day. And when I did that, I was able to rather than prove myself to that person, I was able to be available to the Holy Spirit and to those other people that weren't as bold, right? That needed me. I could see them now because I had the energy and the life.

See, I think there's this undergirding thing that's like I don't matter. When you don't have a boundary, it's like saying I don't matter enough for me. But see the only way we can truly love our neighbor and be empathetic and kind to them is we do have to drink from the well of life. You need time for yourself. You need to drink of the spirit if you want to give of the spirit. You need to attain the life of God if you want to give the life of God. Otherwise, the only life you're giving is the one that you can drum up within yourself. And as believers, if we believe anything is that we can't do it on our own, we need the Lord.

So today, be okay setting boundaries. Just do it in a loving and nice way, but you matter too. You're important to God, too. You're a child of God, too. And you need Him just as much as everybody else does. So legalism, vain glory, no boundaries, and this is the last one, and probably the biggest one, I might have said that about legalism, and I think I made that mistake in the first service, too. But this is a bigger one. Excuse me. This is a bigger one – anger.

Jesus says to us anyone who says to his neighbor – raca, which is like cussing them out, is in danger of the San Hedren, and anyone who says you fool is in danger of hell. What does He mean by that? It seems a bit harsh. Now again, if you're legalistic, you're like okay, I can't say fool to people, and then if I don't say that, I'm fine. He's talking about again, the heart; a posture of the heart. Does your heart say fool! Fool! You fool! Stupid. You idiot. Dummy. I've been there before and it's a dangerous place to be.

Our good friends Greg and Marie, been with them for a long time, and they were one of the lucky ones who actually did get a new house and they sold their old house and bought a new, beautiful home, but there was this long arduous process they went through where they had to wait like over a year and live in two different homes and move multiple times. And they finally got into like their dream home. Beautiful house. Wonderful neighborhood. And things are going great. They meet all their neighbors and they're all super nice people, they're getting along with

everybody, and Greg hires a gardener to kind of clean up the lawn, maybe trim some bushes and things. And one of the things he asks him to do is to cut the tree, which is like hanging over their driveway, it kind of brushes against their car when they pull in. Like no big deal, right?

He gets a call one day from the gardener who was doing the work, and he's like I need you to come over here. Your neighbor is laying into me. And so Greg gets there. Greg, by the way, is a property manager so he's used to dealing with upset people and he's trained in how to do all this stuff. And he's like one of the nicest people I know, by the way.

Super nice guy. He gets there and this guy goes from dressing down his gardener to shifting his wrath to Greg, and just starts cussing him out, laying into him and dressing him down. Right?

And he's saying stuff like 'this tree, this is a California oak. You can't trim a California oak in the summer, you'll kill it' and going on and on. Finally, he starts dropping the F-bomb, and Greg just shuts it down and ends the conversation. I felt so bad for them, too, because there's something when you have a next-door neighbor that you have that kind of an.. it's like it becomes this thing that you're aware of all the time.

He was talking to one of his neighbors who said, 'oh yeah, that guy comes out and he hardly ever comes out of his house except to get his mail, but when he does, you wave to him, and he won't wave back to you. He's not a nice man.' But I know that man because that man is me. I have been that guy before. I know what happened to go to from A to Z.

Probably something like this: that old man was sitting in his chair, and he looked out his window and there was a gardener trimming HIS tree. Yes, it was over his neighbor's yard, but it's his tree. Why didn't somebody ask me about trimming my tree? It's on his side. But that's my tree. Fool. That fool should have asked me. Fool! He should have asked me. I think I heard somewhere that if you trim those trees in the summer that you'll kill them. He's cutting it way too close to the branch. That fool. He's going to kill my tree. That fool is killing my tree. Fool!

We have all been there. Drinking from the fountain of anger is like drinking vodka. Anger makes you drunk. If you've never been angry, we've all been angry. We know, when you drink of this, you go from sensible to angry to the irony, you're the fool. You are the one burning down your relationships. You're the one harming your neighbors. You're the one burning bridges because you allowed the enemy to put this word in your heart – fool. Stupid.

God worries and cares about people. He loves people. His whole thing, His whole deal, everything, everything that He's doing is not buildings, it's not meetings, it's not businesses or organizations, at the end of the day for the Lord, is people. And the people that make a difference are the people who love people. Who live in the easy rhythms of a golden rule reality that's not obsessed with setting things right or telling it like it is, or saying you fool, or showing people how awesome they are, or not having boundaries, or being legalistic or being perfect,

it's the people who have a new heart or a new creation that just love people. You get that right, you've got all the law and the prophets. You got it all. Isn't that great? You got the whole thing. That's what Jesus says. If you just do this, you get it all. So easy to forget it.

So Lord, we ask for that, in Jesus' name. Not for a new set of rules, just a new heart. We pray, God that in a miracle working kind of way, the same way that a man with cancer could be healed by you, we pray that you would heal us of a broken angry heart, of a prideful heart, of a wounded heart that doesn't have enough energy to love our neighbor. I pray for every person under the sound of my voice that would say if I ask them, Bobby, I'm just surviving. No more! I pray, God an outpouring of your joy, energy, life, that loving our neighbor would be a new gift, something we could do to make an impact for you, full of life, full of joy, something that comes naturally to us, this is what we pray for and ask, and we ask it in the strong name of Jesus, amen.