

HOOR OF POWER OF 10.01.2010

GOOD MORNING/INVOCATION

SSC: Welcome! God is answering your prayers powerfully. See it, believe it. Turn around and shake hands with somebody and tell them God is answering your prayers powerfully.

Yes, this is the day that the Lord has made. We will rejoice and be glad in it. Lord, this truly is Your house of answered prayer. During this hour, may we hear, see and feel Your power. Open our eyes to Your glory, open our ears to Your message of encouragement and open our hearts to Your will and purpose, Amen.

SCRIPTURE – Psalm 5 & Lamentations 3 - RHS

RHS: Listen to the word read from the holy bible, God's word to you and to me. Give ear to my words, Oh Lord, consider my meditation. Listen to my cry for help, King God to You I pray. In the morning, Oh Lord, You hear my voice; in the morning I lay my requests before You and wait in expectation. Lead me, Oh Lord, in Your righteousness; make straight the path before me. Let all who take refuge in You, oh God, let all be glad; let them sing for joy. Spread Your protection over them that those who love Your name may rejoice in You. For surely, Oh Lord, You bless us; You surround us with Your favor as with a shield. Because of the Lord's great love we are not consumed, for His compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is Your righteousness. This is the word of God.

INTERVIEW – BECCA STEVENS

RHS: Our guest today is an ordained Episcopal priest. Her name is Becca Stevens. She's also chaplain at St. Augustine's, Vanderbilt University. She's the founder and director of Magdalene. Now that's very, very important. Magdalene is a residential community for women who have survived violence, prostitution and addiction. She established this nonprofit charity, Thistle Farms.

Now Reverend Stevens maintains a commitment to the truth that love is the most powerful force for change in the world. To date, she has raised over 10 million dollars, has gained national press coverage for the organization she supports, she's won awards from the First Foundation, from the Academy of Women and Achievement. She's the author of five books including her latest Funeral for a Stranger, and this remarkable book Find Your Way Home. She lives in Nashville with her husband, Grammy winning song writer Marcus Hummon and their three sons. Welcome with me, Reverend Becca Stevens.

Fifty four years I've been in this ministry and this is the first time I've held the hands of a woman priest from the Episcopal church.

BS: Oh it's an honor! Thank you very much. It is a gift to be here, it really is.

RHS: Why?

BS: It means a lot, not just to me but all the women that I'm representing back home that are part of this community, for us to be here is a big deal, so thank you all very much.

RHS: This is your book.

BS: Yes. This is a book actually called Find Your Way Home and it's by, I wrote a lot of it but it's also written by most of the women who have come through Magdalene and have a story to tell about love and healing in their own lives.

RHS: How and when did Magdalene begin?

BS: It began in 1997. I wanted to help set up a sanctuary for women who could come in and stay for two years, not pay anything to live there, not take any federal or state funding but just be a community of women who would help one another heal and be whole and come back into community. So we opened up the very first house in '97 and now we have about six communities of women that we sponsor and support.

RHS: Why did you start it? How did you get into it?

BS: My dad was a minister and my mom was a social worker, and I think I'm my parents' daughter. And I came into this work wanting to help women who were coming off the streets, but I also wanted to believe that grace and love could really be about healing for people and I wanted to witness that and I feel more faithful now 12 years later than when I started. And I also think that I needed that healing, too, to be able to live out the gospel as I understood it and to be able to speak my truth. So it's been a gift all around.

RHS: But you aren't married?

BS: I am married.

RHS: You have three children?

BS: I do.

RHS: You're Episcopal priest?

BS: I am.

RHS: Wow.

BS: It's a lot.

RHS: Tell us a story of one of the women, and first of all, is it true that this is a place where women who are abused or have been hurt.

BS: Right, well they all have criminal histories of prostitution addiction, and what I've learned over the years is I mean I have not met a women coming off the streets who has not been abused. The average age that women who are part of Magdalene and on average the women that we serve have been on the streets about ten years and have about a hundred arrests on their record.

RHS: Oh!

BS: But they have started, the average age they're first abused, sexually abused is between the ages of 7 and 11, and that a lot of times broken communities and broken systems have been a part of the women going to the streets. So it has to be a loving, compassionate, non judgmental community that welcomes them back, to help them climb that mountain of recovery and brokenness to get to a place where they know that they're the beloved children of God.

But when you said tell a story, there's one woman that came to my mind immediately and that was a woman named Sheila who was from Miami, and she came into the program and about a week later found out that she had breast cancer. And so not only was she getting clean and sober, but she was going to have to go through some painful procedures and count on a brand new community that she did not know very well could be about healing. And she lost all her hair about six months into it, and was you know just bald. And I was like do you want us to get you a wig, what can we do to help, and she said that those scars were like a road map for her to remind her about where she had been and about how much she had been through, and they were giving her the strength to do something different and to just believe that there is something else coming and now she has this long thick hair about down to her waist. She's married, she has two children, owns her own home and she does outreach to women on the streets as her ministry.

RHS: Wow. Wow.

BS: And I know she's watching.

RHS: Thistle Farms. What a name. What is it and why does it have the name of what I remember as a boy on a farm, being the worst weed that you could grow. Thistle.

BS: It is and that's why I think we named it that. If you go out to the streets where women walk, or the ally's where they're sleeping, that is the last flower growing is a thistle. It has a deep tap root and it can push up through inches of concrete to still bloom and while it has you know a thorny exterior, a history of survival by brutality, it has this regal center..

RHS: History of survival by brutality?

BS: ..the reason it survives is it hurts to pick it.

RHS: Oh.

BS: You know I mean it's very, in some ways, a violent flower. But the beautiful thing is it has this beautiful center and it's like, it reminds me of the scripture from Matthew, even Solomon in all his glory is not arrayed like one of these that soft, wonderful place that God's created in all of us. And so thistles are a beautiful symbol and they're a reminder to me at least that the world is our farm and there's beauty in all parts of creation and nothing should be condemned and we shouldn't forget about anybody. And you can actually make beautiful, beautiful paper out of thistles.

RHS: Really?

BS: We make paper, that's one of the products. We make all natural bath and body care products and they're in about 22 states now and on the Internet.

RHS: This is your company?

BS: The company and it employs 23 women who were formally on the streets right now. So it's a beautiful ministry. I'm a volunteer for it so other people, but 100% of the proceeds from every product goes back into the program and into salaries that support women who are coming out of the program.

They're the sales team, they're the bankers, they're the inventory specialists, they're the.. what else do you do, ship? They do everything. It's really beautiful.

It's one of my favorite jobs that I get to be a part of.

RHS: It's your calling.

BS: It's my calling.

RHS: You're the founder.

BS: Yes.

RHS: Jesus inspired you.

BS: I like to think that not only was it inspired but that it has been my saving grace. And that when I look back on it, I think that I didn't miss the beauty of the thistle or the women that I get to work with or this ministry, has been the greatest gift in my life.

RHS: Wow. God bless you.

BS: Thank you.

RHS: He has. He is. You are favored by God. Yes you're favored. He picked you. Jesus said you have not chosen Me, I have chosen you. Thank you.

BS: Thank you. Thank you very much. Peace and love.

RHS: Becca's book, Funeral for a Stranger is available at our bookstore or at hourofpower.org.

MESSAGE – SHEILA SCHULLER COLEMAN "Praying POWER into Your Life"

SSC: Well today I'm continuing; I'm number two, in our message series on answered prayer. Well a couple of weeks ago, my husband said "Sheila do you want to go see Stephanie play volleyball?" Now Stephanie is our niece and she is

a senior, she's the captain of the volleyball team at Westmont College, and they were playing at Azusa Pacific, just around, not too far from here. And I said I'd love to go see Stephanie play.

So it was after work and I ran home, put my blue jeans on, I put my every day shoes on, and we ran out to Azusa Pacific. And of course my husband, we get to this big campus in the gym and he parks in the furthest space, way out on the far Netherlands of the parking lot. Any other women have that problem with their husbands? And so because he doesn't want any tiny little ding on his car, right? Well I had my little every day shoes on and I thought uh oh, it has been raining today, and I was able to tip toe around the puddles, as I went across the parking lot into the gym. And it was a tough game, let me tell you. Westmont and Azusa Pacific, two Christian colleges with girls; some of those girls are six four?

I'm six feet. I could have played for them maybe, if I'd had an athletic bone in my body.

But any rate, it was fun watching them but then there we were, it was the end of the game, it was late in the evening and we got to the gym doors and there was a torrential downpour. And I thought oh no. Because the shoes I wore, my every day shoes, are suede magenta with little rhinestones and there's no way that they can handle torrential downpour rain. So I sat there and I looked at the rain and I looked at the rain and I said "Jim, go get the car. I'm not going to run through this rain." So he went and got the car, but even then from the gym to the sidewalk, there was a lot of rain. It was just pouring, pouring, buckets of rain.

And I muttered under my breath, "oh I wore the wrong shoes tonight." The lady standing next to me said "yeah me too." Well I looked at her feet and she had boots up to her knees. And she must have seen a dubious look on my face, because she says "well they're brand new and I haven't had them waterproofed yet." And I said "well I'm thinking of taking my shoes off because I don't want my shoes ruined." "That's a good idea," she said. She takes her boots off. And I tucked my shoes in my raincoat, she tucked her boots in her raincoat and as soon as my husband got there, I went dashing through those puddles, making sure I didn't get a drop of rain on my shoes. And of course my husband and my son Jason, who was with me, they opened the doors and they were laughing hysterically at me. "Mom, don't you know, Sheila, don't you know, shoes are meant to protect your feet from the rain. Not you to protect your shoes from the rain." I said "you think I look silly, look at that woman over there with the boots!" Cause she was doing the very same thing.

So what does that have to do with prayer? Well I would dare say, suggest, that sometimes we take God's power in the storms of life when the rougher it gets and the more it rains, we take His power and instead of putting it on and jumping into the puddles, we take God's power and we hide it under our raincoat. Why do we do that? We do that because we're protecting ourselves and Him from looking foolish. After all, what if, what if I pray for somebody who has cancer and they don't get well? What if I pray for someone to get a job and they don't get a job. And so because I don't want God to look like He's not able, I hide Him under my raincoat. Isn't that a temptation and it goes to reason because too often when we've prayed, we haven't seen the answers we thought we would see to our prayers.

When I was a little girl, I heard the stories of Jesus that He would heal a paralytic instantly, He would give sight to a blind man just like that, and He raised a little girl from the dead. More than once, when I was a little girl and I got sick, just a cold, but I was in my bed and I pulled those covers up and I remember doing this more than once and praying, "Jesus, I'm a sick little girl. Will You heal me?"

Jesus, I'm a sick little girl! Are You going to heal me?" Well, He didn't heal me. Have we all had experiences like that where we've prayed; we didn't see what we thought we were expecting to see.

Well if you're like me, the challenge is that we have misconceptions about what prayer really is. Because for some of us, we think that prayer is a vending machine. And we just put a prayer in, like a quarter and we say okay I want to be healed from my cold. I'll push that button and there it is, I should expect God to heal me because I put my prayer in. Or, we think prayer is a slot machine. I put my quarter in, I'll put my prayer in, pull that handle and I'm going to take a gamble that God may or may not answer my prayer. Or maybe we think that prayer is an ATM machine. Oh I'm going to go to church, I'm going to tithe, I'm going to pray, I'm going to read my scripture and I'm putting deposits into my account and when the time comes, I better be able to go over there and pull out what I need, that withdrawal, that healing or whatever it is I need from God.

But prayer is not a vending machine, prayer is not an ATM machine and prayer is not a slot machine. What is prayer? Prayer is a mechanism for God to achieve His purposes through you and through me. In fact, I have a definition for prayer I'm going to share with you today. I think this bible verse encapsulates what real true prayer is. And it's Philippians 2:13 and this is what I believe prayer is. Prayer is God at work within you, giving you the will and the power to achieve His purposes. Let me say that one more time. Prayer is God at work within you, giving you the will and the power to achieve His purposes.

When I was a little girl, we would go back to Iowa every summer, and I have to tell you, the lightning storms in California pale in comparison to the lightning storms in Iowa. Because the lightning storms in Iowa are horrendous. Oh the thunder cracks and the light just lights up the day, that lightning. And my first lightning storm in Iowa, I was up in grandma's bedroom, in my bedroom at grandma's house, just a little girl, and I heard that crack and the lightning came through the lace curtains and lit up everything in my room. And I must have been huddled in my bed, shivering and crying because dad came in. And I thought oh dad's here, good. My daddy is here. He's going to tuck me in tighter and comfort me in my bed, but he picked me up. And then he started walking down towards the hall and I thought wait, wait, wait, daddy we're going the wrong direction. I'm supposed to stay in bed. I want to hide here under the covers.

But my daddy kept carrying me down the stairs, and I'm thinking no, no, no, we're going the wrong direction. But no he kept on going, in fact he opened the front door and took me out on the front porch where the lightning was flashing and the thunder was cracking. And my daddy held me in my pajamas and he said "Sheila, this is nothing to be afraid of. This is God's power on display. Can you see it? Can you feel it? Look at it. Look how exciting, look how powerful." I thought it is. This is the best firework display I've ever seen, even though we lived right around the corner from Disneyland. This was far better than that. And because my daddy had taken me.. I wanted to hide in the bedroom under the covers. But my daddy took me out onto the front porch and I got to see a front row seat of God's power on display. I could have missed it all together. Could have missed it all together.

When you pray, you get to see God's power on display. That's why we pray. You know, Jesus doesn't really need us to pray. God doesn't need you and I to pray. And there's a good story to illustrate it because I don't know if you.. probably most of you have heard this story. The disciples were out on their boat all night. And they threw those nets into the sea. And then they pulled them back up into the boat, empty, not even a little minnow. So they threw the nets back out again

and pulled those nets up, empty. Any of you guys ever see the deadliest catch, is that what it's called where the king Alaskan crab people. My boys loved to watch that. And they come up sometimes, they'd hoist up these great big cages, filled with Alaskan crab. Every now and then they pull up one and there's just a few little crab in there. Well these disciples, they didn't have a single fish in that net, not a single fish.

Well come morning, Jesus was standing on the shore. About a hundred yards, which is from one tip of the Cathedral to the other, and Jesus yells out to them "hey guys, catch anything?" "No, we put those nets down all night long and we haven't caught anything." "Do it one more time," Jesus says. "This time, put your net on this side of the boat." So the disciples put their net on that side of the boat and of course, we all know the end of the story. There were so many fish in there, they couldn't even contain it. It's really kind of a cute story because it doesn't end there because by the time they hauled all that fish back to shore, guess what? Jesus had breakfast cooking, waiting for them. Here the coals were burning, fish were already frying, and the bread was there. Did Jesus need that boat? Did Jesus need the disciples? Did Jesus need the net? Absolutely not. He says fish, just jump right here onto My fire and the fish did. There He was. He didn't need those disciples. So why bother? Why bother? Because Jesus wanted the disciples to have a front row seat to see and witness God's power on display. When you pray, you get to watch a powerful display. And when you pray, you get to play a powerful role in the drama of life. For it is God at work within you, giving you the will and the power to achieve His purposes. When I was a brand new principal of a Christian school, about 300 children, it was my responsibility to make sure that those children were academically and spiritually given the sound curriculum and instruction. And I took that responsibility very seriously. One day, one of our teachers, Mrs. Evans, and my son Nicholas had her. She was a beloved teacher at our school, first grade teacher. And she came into my office after school, which some of the teachers would do from time to time, but I could tell something was up, something was wrong with Sandy Evans. She sat down and she said "Sheila I got a call from my daughter. She and her husband have a little girl named Moriah, who's only 5. They live in Hawaii but they have discovered that she has a malignant brain tumor and they need to bring her here to CHOC, they have much better treatment, plus they need to be around family who can support them better."

And so when the Moriah and her family got here, I found out what day her surgery was, 12 hour surgery, and I went to CHOC hospital and I sat with Sandy and her family and I prayed. When the doctors came out, they said we weren't able to get it all because some of it was in the brain stem. But we did the best we could but we're not holding out for much hope. Well after I left there, I went back to school and it was a school chapel, and I got in front of the students and without even thinking, I said to the children "Mrs. Evans granddaughter had surgery today and it didn't go very well, so I need you all to pray for Moriah. Her name is Moriah, the little girl. Please pray for Moriah. Pray for a miracle." Well the words were no sooner out of my mouth and I thought oh no, Sheila, what have you done now? Because what if? What if there isn't a miracle?

What if God doesn't answer our prayer? And so I was worried about what I might have done to the faith of all these children. Sure enough, I got a phone call from Sandy a couple of days later, and she said "Sheila, it does not look good at all, in fact Moriah has slipped into a coma. She's on life support," and they were going to take her off life support in 24 hours. "Can you come and pray for us?" So I went to CHOC and I walked the halls, and I walked into that intensive care unit,

and I saw this precious little five year old girl, her head still bare of where they'd shaved it for the surgery and I laid my head and I could feel the soft little prickles of her head, her hair on her head. And I said "Lord Jesus, I just pray for Moriah. Take Your precious daughter home. Cradle her. Make her homecoming peaceful, sweet and tender just as she is."

I got in my car and drove back to school and thought well now Sheila, look what you've done. You have to face those children who've all been praying for a miracle. What are you going to tell them? Well I was not going to do an assembly, and talk to all three hundred of them at once. It was too important. So I decided to go from room to room to room. A lot of rooms, about 15 to be exact.

And I sat down and I gathered the children in each classroom around my feet and I said "children, I've asked you to pray for Moriah." "How is she doing, Mrs. Coleman?" "I've been praying for a miracle." "I just know that God's going to heal her."

"Well, I have to tell you she's not doing well. But sometimes when we pray, God doesn't always answer our prayers the way we want Him to. But His answers are always best."

"So are you saying we shouldn't pray for her healing anymore?"

"No, I think we just need to pray that God.."

"I'm going to keep praying for her." "I'm going to keep praying for her."

"I'm going to keep praying for her."

I went around to all those classrooms, I told all those children, I discouraged them from continuing to pray for Moriah. I basically took God's power and I hid it in my raincoat. But those children didn't listen to me. They kept praying for Moriah. They kept praying for Moriah. They kept praying for Moriah. The next day Sandy called me and she said "Sheila, the doctors have seen a sign of life in Moriah. And they're not going to take her off life support just yet. They're going to give her 24 more hours." Twenty four hours came and went.

I got another call from her the next day. "Sheila, the doctors have seen more life in Moriah. They're not going to take her off life support." I want you to imagine with me what it was like that spring when Moriah was wheeled onto our playground with the balloons hanging behind her wheelchair, her head, her bald head with a little bitty butterfly painted on it. And all the children running up to her saying "Moriah, Moriah, Moriah, we prayed for you Moriah. We prayed for you Moriah. We prayed for you Moriah." Those children and I had a front row seat at seeing God's power at work.

What if, what if I hadn't asked those children to pray? Well I want to say to you today if life is terrifying, if life is threatening and overwhelming, don't give into the temptation to go run and hide in the covers in the bedroom, but ask God to give you the faith, let your daddy carry you down to the front porch and pray so you can see God's power on display and have a front row seat. And if life is discouraging for you, if you are depressed because you have put one net out after another, one net out after another, you have sent out one resume after another, you have filled out refinance forms with one bank after another and you've been denied, denied, denied, not one nibble, pray and say to God where do You want me to cast my net out now? Because the story is not over and God is not done.

If your life is in ashes and you are facing incurable cancer, if you are spiritually and emotionally dead, I want you to pray knowing that the God that you are praying to is a God who hurls lightning in the heavens. He's a God who fills your nets to overflowing and provides more than you need and He is a God who raises little girls from the dead. If you're in a storm of life, don't you dare hide God's

power in your raincoat. You take it out, put it on and you jump in those puddles, you run through the rain because you've got the God of the universe at your back. Before I close in prayer, I want to take a moment and I want to encourage all of you that as you pray, and as God answers your prayers, please let us know, write us a letter if you're watching at home on TV or if you're here joining us, send me a note, call us, via e-mail, let us know. We want to celebrate with you what God is doing in your life. And if you have never prayed at all to God, I want you to know that Jesus Christ, Jesus Christ wants to be your best friend.

And all you need to do is tell Him, Jesus, be my friend.

So will you stand with me now for the closing prayer? Jesus, I want You to be my best friend. Thank You for forgiving me and giving me new life. God almighty, when You wanted the world to know how great You are, You came to the world as a little child. You were God, although yet a babe. When you wanted me to know how powerful You are, You shook my faith through a little girl. May a powerful faith be born in us today, may we refuse to stop believing even when there is no hope, may we refuse to stop praying, even when it appears the end is near. And in the process, use our prayers to bring life, hope and miracles. Amen.

BENEDICTION - RHS

RHS: And now may the Lord bless you, may He keep you, may He give you peace deep down in your soul till you come to stand before Jesus in that day in which there will be no sunrise, no sunset, only eternal light and life forevermore. Amen.