

Schuller Discusses What Went Wrong at Crystal Cathedral

The Crystal Cathedral is no more, at least not in the form that it has been known for decades. The **bankrupt church** has a new name and a new pastor.

Now that the dust is settling, **Robert A. Schuller**, the son of **televangelist Robert H. Schuller**, is speaking out. Schuller was groomed to become the pastor of the **Crystal Cathedral** and for many years was part of the weekly television broadcast, *The Hour of Power*.

But Schuller says he was forced out in 2008. From there, he sat on the sidelines and watched as the rest of his family suffered through a painful ordeal last year. Charisma News caught up with Schuller, author of the new book *When You are Down to Nothing, God is Up to Something*, in the first of this two-part interview to discuss what went wrong.

Charisma News: The drama at the Crystal Cathedral seems to have started years ago. You left in 2008 and word is that you were forced out. What happened there?

Schuller: There was a board meeting on July 9, 2008. The board decided to make my brother-in-law Jim Penner* my boss. In September he decided that my sermons were “not anointed” and he couldn’t air them on *The Hour of Power*. In October he told me I could preach any time other than Sunday mornings. With that I resigned.

Charisma News: Over the last year or so we’ve seen a lot of unfortunate circumstances at the Crystal Cathedral. Is there a connection?

Schuller: The church went into bankruptcy about two years later. That’s pretty fast, if you ask me.

Charisma News: Went wrong at Crystal Cathedral? Was it also an issue with the board? It seems like I hear a lot about “the board” in news reports.

Schuller: Before I left, I was in the process of moving the **Crystal Cathedral** into a Carver Policy Governance model, which is basically a model of pure governance. There are many corporations which have adopted this model. It is a very good way to govern any institution whether it's for profit, nonprofit, church or secular. If you're going to have board members, the board members have to be free from conflict of interest. I think there were people who were very threatened by the transition and couldn't allow that to proceed. They were very sensitive to that so they made sure that didn't happen.

Charisma News: So where are you directing your energies now?

Schuller: I had to reinvent myself from a television preacher to something else. I'm a chairman of a Youtoo social network. Since I left the Crystal Cathedral, we started a fund to acquire two television networks. We acquired FamilyNet in February of 2008 and since rebranded that as Youtoo. It's available through most Time Warner networks. We have developed television software which allows individuals to really connect with television. They can create 15-second fame spots next to what we put on television.

Charisma News: How difficult was that transition?

Schuller: It was very difficult emotionally and spiritually. I had to go through a crash course in education as far as business practices and principles because they're really quite different from what I was used to. I was used to raising money simply by going on television and saying, “Hey, help me out.” You're not allowed to do that when you're raising funds for a corporation or private placement money.

In addition to that, I had to come to grips with my relations

with my family and with other people. So it was a very, very difficult time. I like to use the illustration of a tapestry when it comes to living. When we look at the back of the tapestry we see a bunch of strings and knots and it's hard to understand why things are the way they are. But the time will come when we see the other side of the tapestry and we realize all things work together for those who love God and who are called according to His purpose.

Charisma News: What was that the biggest lesson that you learned through that transition?

Schuller: There are many lessons. Clearly the one that summarizes it and puts it all together into one package is "When you're down to nothing, God is up to something." And that was something I held on to and something that I clung to—the promises of God.

That process for me started with the prayer of Jabez. The prayer of Jabez starts out "Enlarge my territory and then bless me indeed." But I didn't focus on that part of the prayer. What I actually focused on was the second part of the prayer, which few people pay attention to. That part of the prayer is "Keep me from evil that I may not cause pain."

My first goal when I left the Crystal Cathedral was to believe in such a way that I did not cause any pain to the Crystal Cathedral or anything that was happening there. My second goal then was to discover where God was leading me and how I could best use my talents and gifts to further the kingdom of God without interfering with whatever is taking place at the Crystal Cathedral.

*Penner could not be reached for comment.

In part two of this interview, Schuller discusses how hard it was to watch his family lose so much during the bankruptcy and subsequent fall out at the Crystal Cathedral.