

**Week #1 of a 2-Week Series:**

## **MASTERMIND (Part 1)**

**Jan. 12, 2020**

**Rev. Richard Maraj**

**Rev. Richard Maraj:** So how many people here know that living with more balance – not overworking and not always rushing – is a good thing, but you don't always do balance very well in your own life? How many people know that exercising is a good thing to do, but you don't always get to the gym or exercise regularly? And you know eating well is a very good and important thing, but your diet isn't always as consistent as you'd like it to be?

You know, every single one of us wants to have improvement and success in our lives, whether it's in relationships, in our finances, our health, career... whatever it is. But we don't always do the things we need to do consistently to get the kind of results that we really want. Sometimes we don't take the actions; sometimes we don't follow through; sometimes we don't have a plan or the focus or the discipline that we know what we should do to actually attract and manifest the kind of life that we want.

Last week we talked about Napoleon Hill's book, *Think and Grow Rich*, where he interviewed 500 rich, very successful individuals to try to get an idea what the secret to success is. And he came to realize that the secret is that human beings have access to what he called "Infinite Intelligence": a wisdom and a genius – a guidance and potential – way beyond the human mind. Way beyond! And an unlimited reservoir that is good and available to us. And do you know in his book, *Think and Grow Rich* – as well as all his other books, including *The Laws of Success* – a way to do this and to practice these principles to access this Infinite Intelligence he always recommended being a part of a Mastermind group. To join with like-minded individuals who had an intention and desire to take their lives to another level, and make a big difference, and to support each other in a way of accountability that would help us do things that would not only bless our lives, but help other people fulfill their success and desires. The idea was to practice these principles and create a structure and process by taking advantage of the group dynamic to create even more good for everyone joining together.

Remember when Jesus said, "*Where two or more are gathered, there I am in the midst of them*"? He's talking about multiplying and magnifying the group power. Whether it's a vision or faith or a certain spiritual principle, when we come together, we really can magnify that! And to create a greater good than we can on our own practicing these principles together.

And so, how do we do that? We immerse our mind in the mind of God, and we tap in to the "Mastermind." The Apostle Paul said, "*Do not conform to the patterns of the world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.*" And this system is about helping align our mind and preparing our mind to go deeper into the mind of God... and that will always bring great results.

Now I am sure we have all heard of Mastermind groups. It was mentioned by Napoleon Hill way back then, but there all sorts of various forms of Mastermind groups: people coming together with a positive intention to create greater things. The Unity minister, Jack Boland, many years ago took that idea of the Mastermind process and joined the 12 steps of AA with the spiritual process to do the same thing, to tap into it. He did it in the way that created a much more spiritually-centered program. In fact, he created a Mastermind journal, and groups in the church would actually do this together and pray and set their

intentions together. How many people have heard of Jack Boland and his Mastermind journals? So many know how powerful it is.

The Mastermind mediation that we do – the visualization – is a form of the very same seven steps to prepare our mind to tap in to that Infinite Intelligence of God. Since we do that after each service, I thought it'd be good to explain the process and why it work, and how we can work it in our lives. And whether we just attend in between services, or try and create our own group, it is powerful and amazing stuff to learn how to tap into the power of the Mastermind.

Today I will do the first four and next week we'll finish with the final three steps, and we will actually do that thing that we do after service right in the service so you can fully experience and you can fully understand it.

**The first step is to SURRENDER.** How many people here like things going your way and get a little upset when they don't go your way? Anybody?

***[Congregation laughs]***

How many people have ever been overly aggressive, controlling or forced something to happen in your life? Anybody ever?

***[Congregation laughs]***

And how many people occasionally get in your own way? Anybody ever get in your own way?

You know, the practice of spiritual surrender is, I believe, very misunderstood. It's often seen as being weak, passive, soft; giving up, settling, not really trying. Surrendering: kind of throwing in the white flag. But to surrender to Spirit is one of the most powerful and important of all spiritual practices! Because to surrender is really an act of releasing the fear and anxiety and the judgements and the negative energies that we hold. It is about stopping fighting, struggling and forcing, and just letting go. It is about letting go of attachments: letting go how we think life has to be for us to be happy. And it's really about just relaxing and opening up to Spirit: opening up in a way that brings us – as what it says in Scripture – the peace that surpasses all human understanding. It is not giving up; it is giving way. It's surrendering your small self to connect with your true self. It is awareness that there is a Spirit and a Wisdom and an Intelligence in us that, not only has a plan for us to prosper and succeed, but is always there seeking to express more good.

Boateng – in Boateng's yoga – he said that the key to attaining the state of yoga is surrender. It is surrendering your will to Spirit: surrendering to that Higher Intelligence and Power. And he said true surrender is attained when you can say these words sincerely and mean it. And it is: *“God, I give you myself; I give you my body; I give you my mind; and I give you my heart to do with it as you see fit.”* It is the ultimate, *“God, Thy will be done.”* Not my will, but Thy will. And, you know, the calming down of that brings such peace, and it opens us to allow God's Spirit to move through us.

Surrender is not an easy thing. When life isn't going well, it's easy to get scared and caught up in negativity. And in doubt and fear. The thing about surrender is: it is a daily, daily, daily practice, because we do get attached to how things should be. How we want things to be. We do hold on to things, sometimes, that aren't as healthy or beneficial to us.

Everyone take a deep breath, and half-voice say to yourself: I surrender. Together:

**[With congregation]:** *"I surrender."*

Take a deep, cleansing breath again and just relax. And again:

**[With congregation]:** *"I surrender."*

Even quieter voice. Take a deep breath. Again:

**[With congregation]:** *"I surrender."*

Do you know: the more we let go – and the more we surrender – the more we actually open our lives to the peace and the wisdom? To the guidance and abundance of God? It's one of the most powerful things we can do, is to surrender.

**The second thing in the process is to affirm that I BELIEVE.** It says in Scripture, *"All things are possible to those who believe."* Jesus said, *"He who believes in me shall do the works that I do and even greater things than these..."* Which really means: if you believe in the Spirit of God in you, the way he believed in the Spirit of God in him, that – through that Spirit – we can do even greater things. Whatever you ask in prayer, believe that you've received it. Now, believing things is a powerful thing... but I just want to take you to the Book of Mark, Chapter 9, when Jesus... There's a man who has a son who is epileptic. And he was epileptic for a long time, and he's not sure [his son can be healed]. And Jesus said, *"It's possible."* The man says to Jesus, *"Lord, I believe, but please help my unbelief."* I bet every one of us has believed, but we also have some unbelief.

You know, every one of us, I know, 100% right now believes that the sun's going to rise and shine tomorrow morning. We believe that! You believe that, right now, that chair that you are sitting on is going to hold your weight and not collapse. I think so; I think you believe that! We believe you take two aspirin and, 20 minutes later, that pain's going away. We believe a lot of things! But when it comes to believing spiritual things – things that we can't see – sometimes our belief wavers. Things don't go as well. We get pulled into the appearance, and sometimes it's hard for us to believe. Belief is not a static thing. It is something that must be cultivated. It must be worked on. It must be nurtured. We have beliefs – and we keep affirming those – but we also have to work on our unbelief, because we have some of that too.

So the way that we do that – again, back to the Scripture from Paul – is to be transformed by the renewing of your mind. The way we work on the belief: one of them is to remind us of the Truth that we sometimes forget: when it says that you are created in the image and likeness of God. That you are the temple of the living God. That you are the light of the world. That you can do all things through God, who strengthens you. We need to remind ourselves of that Truth, because sometimes we develop spiritual amnesia. We believe it for other people, but we don't always believe it for ourselves. So reminding the mind – renewing the mind. Reaffirming these truths we sometimes allow circumstances to make us forget. Is an important thing! Reminding ourselves: God loves me. God has a plan for me, even if I can't see it right now. To believe in that! That belief has to be cultivated. It has to be worked on.

And the second way to work on our belief is: the more we immerse our mind in God, the more we feel filled and centered with the love and the Spirit and the abundance in God. And our belief begins to increase just spending more time with Spirit.

I always found it interesting that Jesus prayed in the morning; mid-day; he prayed at noon; he prayed in the afternoon; he prayed in the evening; he prayed at night. He prayed a lot! I always think: that's Jesus. Why did he need to pray so much? He's Jesus! He could have made a prayer, and he should have been able to ride that bad boy for a week at least, maybe two!

**[Congregation laughs]**

Why? Here's why: because he was trying to show us that connection to Spirit. See, he would do work, and then withdraw and meditate. He would do work, and withdraw and meditate. Because with our belief, the appearances of life can rock us a bit. And so that you keep tapping into it; you keep tapping into it. Because you build a consciousness of faith. You build a consciousness of belief. And the more we do it, the more even-keeled we are, and it helps us get through those moments. But we need to keep cultivating and practicing: practicing our faith and our belief.

One of my favorite lines is when someone said, *"You know, the only thing I don't like about life is that it's just so daily."*

**[Congregation laughs]**

Like brushing your teeth and doing everything: faith needs to be practiced daily. Consistently and continually. Even when you are on the spiritual path, there are times... Anybody, ever in your life, along your spiritual path, you felt like you lost your faith? You didn't feel connected while you pray? Anybody? Okay, about six; fantastic!

**[Congregation laughs]**

I used to think, when I first got into spirituality, if I just hit this level of consistent meditation, I could put it in spiritual cruise control, and just ride that out for a long time.

**[Congregation laughs]**

But that's not how it works! A part of this evolutionary process is that, sometimes along our path – and things may go well – but, sometimes, we are going to hit something that's going to test our faith. It's going to force us to go deeper, even when we don't want to go deeper. It is not an easy process but we need to continually practice it.

I've mentioned several times: one of the articles I read that really had a huge impact on me was an article by Mother Teresa, where – many years into her ministry – she wondered and wondered what her belief was. It happens, and it is a part of the process. And we need to continually work on what we believe. Keep affirming it by immersing your mind in the mind of God, but also work on our unbelief. Having some unbelief is not anything wrong with us. It's just a part of the process that we need to keep moving and working through: *"Lord, I believe. Please help my unbelief."* The more we work on it, the more we can move through things, get through things and attract and create new things.

I want you to take a deep breath. Half voice, say" "I believe." Together:

**[With congregation]:** "I believe."

Another deep breath, even a softer voice, with more conviction:

**[With congregation]:** "I believe."

Deep breath. One more time and even quieter, with conviction:

**[With congregation]:** *"I believe."*

**I surrender. I believe. And the next step is I FORGIVE.** Anybody ever had someone betray you? Or really mistreat you? And you held a grudge or you were angry or resented or blamed them, and you didn't want to forgive them? Anybody? Okay.

We say things like, *"I will never forgive that so and so for what they did or said."* Or, *"I'll forgive them, but first let me get even!"*

**[Congregation laughs]**

Or some kind of thing like that. I don't know if anybody here says that, but I'm just saying.

**[Congregation laughs]**

Here's the thing. One of the worst ways to store energy is holding onto resentment. You know why? Because it keeps it alive. We keep reliving the pain. The thing happened, and we keep reliving it by resenting and being hateful and being unwilling to forgive. We almost cart that pain like it's sacred, instead of being willing to release it. We would rather deny and pretend and bury those feelings – even though they will undermine, sabotage our success and our peace and joy – rather than being willing to forgive.

There's this couple, and the husband did something not so brilliant. He had apologized to the wife, and the wife said, *"Honey, I forgive you, because I have always believed you forgive and forget."* Yet, every couple of months she would tell him, *"You remember that thing you did? And I forgave and forgot."* She would do that so many times! And the husband said, *"You know, honey; I've been thinking maybe you don't believe in forgive and forget."* She said, *"No, no, no... I believe in forgive and forget. I just don't want you to forget that I forgave and forgot."*

**[Congregation laughs]**

The word "forgive" actually means to loosen, to untie. And to release ourselves from the pain of the past. You see, surrender is about letting go of the resistance... letting go of the anxiety and fear. Forgiveness is different and on even a higher level, because it's about the toxic emotions and the feelings that we hold and harbor which are even more intense and, I would say, more debilitating. You don't need to know how to forgive; you just need to be willing. You just need to have the desire to be liberated and free from that pain, from that story, from that hurt.

So who do you need to forgive? And what are you holding on to from the past that you know is not serving you well and it's time to let go?

I saw a fortune cookie recently and it said, *"Cleaning up the past clears up the future."* The more we are able to forgive and release, we actually open a wider space, and we unblock and unclog ourselves to actually feel more wisdom and inspirations. To allow more light to flow through us.

Deep breath everyone. Half voice again: "I forgive."

**[With congregation]:** "I forgive."

One more deep breath. Together:

**[With congregation]:** "I forgive."

**The fourth one in the process of aligning the mind with God and tapping in to the Infinite Intelligence is to ASK.** I read an article several years ago, and it said the reason that most people don't get what they want is... **[pauses while congregants shout out answers]**. I'll tell you, because I read it.

**[Congregation laughs]**

I was reading it again. It is because they don't know what they want. It sounds ridiculous, but many of us could ramble off a list of what we don't want very quickly, what we don't like, what we can't stand. But we can't always say what it is that we want. Common answers for what do you want are, "I don't know." Another one is, "I'm not sure." And a surprising, but true, one is, "You know? I've never really thought about it." We haven't taken time to think about what it is we desire.

Scripture says, "Ask and you shall receive; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be open unto you." Asking, seeking and knocking is a spiritual directive for every one of us. In fact, there are a number of powerful and important things about asking.

Number one: it is our responsibility to ask. If it says that we are created in the image and likeness of God, and God's the Creator, that means we are creators, and a part of our work here on this planet is to create. To create more light. To create more goodness. And to bring that forth into the world. Not just to bless us, but to bless all people. It is your responsibility to ask and to seek and to knock: our spiritual responsibility!

Second thing about asking is it brings clarity. It forces us to choose, to decide, and to claim what it is that we want.

Another one is that asking shapes us and shapes what our lives will look like. We are the ones to get to shape. We participate.

Another thing about asking is it creates a channel for creative energies to flow. Just by asking, you open up channels and possibilities. The final one is asking actually opens up new possibilities for ourselves. It's important to ask! It's important to have a vision. It's important to have intentions and goals.

You know where Scripture says, "Where there is no vision the people perish"? Do you know what perish is? Our enthusiasm perishes when we don't have goals. Our energy and our joy, our motivation, when we don't have a vision, a goal, something that we are seeking, something that we are asking for, a door that we want opened. It really withers our creative powers, our confidence.

So what do you want to create? It is your responsibility to create... so what is it that you want to create? What do you want to create for yourself? What do you want to create in your relationships? What do you want to create in your finances? What do you want to create at your job? What difference do you want to make? What's the kind of person you want to be? What qualities would you like to express and

embody more? That someone would say, *“Wow! That person is really...”* Is it playfulness? Is it joy? Is it kindness? Is it generosity? There are all kinds of things, and we can have it by being willing to ask.

So I want you to notice two of the three things [in the process] before getting to ask are actually about letting go. Surrendering and forgiving. Isn't that amazing? Michael Beckwith says, *“One hundred percent of spiritual growth is about learning how to let go.”* Because we already came whole, complete, lacking nothing. We are already amazing, spiritual beings. We are already energies of light and love and spiritual power.

It says in Timothy, *“God hasn't given you a spirit of fear and timidity, but a spirit of power, love and self-discipline.”* That's the truth of who we are; it's already there! The question is: can we let go of the stuff that we keep holding on to that is weighing us down from knowing and feeling that truth, and expressing and shining it into the world? We have the power to tap into that creative power. We have the power to join together, and do it in amazing and wonderful ways.

Next week I will talk about the next three steps, but this week what I want you to work on is, I surrender: about really letting go at depth. I want you to work on your belief and your unbelief: to remind your mind, and then immerse your mind in the mind of God, and your belief that things are possible and that you are worthy will increase. Then forgive: what person, what story, what thing from the past is it time to let go? And, finally, ask: what do you want to create? What do you want to attract? What do you want to have? We can tap in to a brilliant intelligence, create all kinds of possibility and good for our lives, if we follow this process. We will truly discover and use the power of the Mastermind.

God bless you all!

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***Thank you to volunteer Kara Marshall for transcribing this message***