

WHITE STONE CEREMONY (Something's Calling You)

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So, it's a new year! And with all new years come the possibility of a better life in some way, shape or form. Whether it'd better improvements in our relationship – with more love and harmony and connection – or healing... Or whether it is with greater finances or career success... Or greater levels of peace or joy or finding a deeper sense of purpose and meaning for life... Or a deeper spiritual connection. Whatever it is, every one of us – particularly at the beginning of a new year – see it as new possibilities and opportunities for some greater or better version of ourselves, or a greater and better version for life.

And so the question is: how do we manifest those? How do we attract those? How do we create those? And, typically, in our culture it's with goals. It is with having a vision, an intention. Of course, this year we call them "resolutions." And so, here are some resolutions that I found tweeted for 2020:

"My new year's resolution for 2020 is to stop dating men with the emotional intelligence of a baked potato."

[Congregation laughs]

So, um, pretty clear where this person's going.

"My resolution for 2020 is to convince as many people that 'hillbilly' stands for 'mountain William.'"

[Congregation laughs]

Hillbilly / mountain William. Anyway...

"My resolution is to keep kicking butt and taking names because detailed record keeping is important."

[Congregation laughs]

"My resolution is to become more efficient so I'm giving up right now and not wasting my entire January pretending I can actually achieve this."

[Congregation laughs]

And, here's the last one. *"My new year's resolutions are to eat better, stop drinking so much, save more, and transcend the limitations of human flesh, becoming one with the hidden, unblinking eye that hovers over the earth."*

[Congregation laughs]

I mean, why not have it all?!? Why not go for it all?!? I saw another one I thought was kind of cute. It said: *"May your troubles last as long as your new year's resolutions."*

[Rev. Maraj and congregation laughs]

You know, in 1908, Henry Ford introduced the Model T, the first car that was made available to the masses and really revolutionized our society: how we live. That very same year, Napoleon Hill

interviewed Andrew Carnegie, the industrialist who mass-produced steel, and revolutionized a bunch of other industries. At the peak of his wealth, when he sold his business – he sold it for \$300 million and turned to full-time philanthropy. I did not know this, but he built 3,000 libraries! He built the Peace Chapel at the Hague in the Netherlands – toward creating world peace and world harmony – and a whole bunch of other public school with his monies, because he really believed that when you have a lot, that there is a responsibility is to bless and help others' lives become better.

In the interview that he had with Napoleon Hill, [Carnegie] directed him to a number of very successful people and charged him to interview them and study them to find their secrets of success. And he interviewed from Thomas Edison to Charles Schwab to Henry Ford: a whole bunch of very, very successful folks. And he came up with: the thing that he believed that was the key to everybody's success – regardless of form – was that all human beings have access to a Universal Intelligence that is deeper and has more genius and wisdom and possibilities than what we can even conceive or ever imagine. That we have the ability to tap into this Universal Intelligence.

And he writes this: *"It is through the faculty of the creative imagination – the finite mind of man that has the direct access to infinite Intelligence. It is the faculty through which hunches and inspiration are received. It is by this faculty that all basic or new ideas are handed over to man."*

You know, in two separate interviews, one with Einstein, and one with Nikola Tesla, who were known as great thinkers, creative imagination. Both of them acknowledge that the Source that they tap into – that we can all tap into – is actually beyond human thinking. It is beyond our own intellect. It is beyond our own understanding. That there is a Higher Power of intelligence and wisdom that is available to all of us.

And they said, you can call it whatever you want. You can call it the field of infinite possibilities. You can call it the creative power of the Universe. You can call it the kingdom of heaven or the kingdom of God. You can call it whatever you want, but there is an unlimited, abundance of possibilities and goodness available to each and every one of us... and we have the ability to tap into it.

And while achieving anything we want in life certainly takes faith and belief – it takes desire and it takes feeling – the foundation of it, they say, to truly access it, we have to access and tap into that deeper wisdom. Not just trust our own mental thinking and ideas, but to go a bit deeper. And we do that by creating an empty space to allow the Infinite Wisdom and Intelligence and Ideas – the guidance, the insights and understanding -- that are beyond our human understanding to come through us.

It's not about wanting more and working more. It's about creating a space to access more: to open ourselves and make ourselves more available. And it's not something trying to force it. It's to allow it. It's not a matter of doing. It's more a matter of being, and just letting it come forth. And sometimes it's hard for us to get out of our heads and our limited thinking, and sometimes we aren't as willing to actually tap into that, even though it's really available.

And two of the main reasons we have a tough time accessing this Infinite Intelligence: the first one is, we have a hard time quieting the mind. Anybody here ever over-think? Obsess about a particular thing, thinking it over and over again?

[Congregation laughs]

Anybody ever had their mind going like the Energizer Bunny? You couldn't shut it off, and it even affected your sleep? Anybody? Anybody ever have meditation where your mind wanders and you just cannot focus and quiet it down?

The mind is a brilliant and amazing gift and tool that we have, but it works much, much better when we take time to actually quiet it down, and create a space for greater ideas and solutions and creativity.

Blaise Pascal, a French mathematician in the 1600s, said that all of man's troubles come from one thing: his inability to be still. You know, with our minds racing all the time, we miss out of a lot of ideas and wisdom and possibilities.

You know, there's a book entitled, *This is Your Brain on Silence*. And it actually says a brain or a mind that is quieter tends to be more peaceful; tends to be more aware; sees solutions easier; tends to find more peace in moving through life and handling things with greater ease.

You know, they did a research study on the effect of silence on mice: two hours of silence for the mice every day. And what they found was a very interesting thing: that the cell development in the hippocampus actually increased and improved. And those things are related to memory and senses, but it's interesting, the power that silence has in our lives.

Eckhart Tolle says that true intelligence operates silently. That stillness is where creativity and solutions to problems are found. You know, Einstein – when he wanted to create something or think deeper or solve problems – he took a nap first, because he wanted to quiet his thinking mind so he could go deeper.

You know, all those things are great. Desire, goals; they're all good. But if we want to go deeper to really get to the foundation or Source of how to create and attract these things at a higher level than we can, we need to first begin to quiet our mind: consistent portions of quieting the mind.

The Bible tells us, *"Be still and know that I am God."* Or be still and tap into this. You know, Jesus would often say, *"Come apart a while and rest."* The brain – the mind – is amazing, but it works infinitely better for us when we take time to quiet it on a consistent basis.

How many people know you could enhance your quality of your life by quieting your mind on a regular basis? Every one of us knows that.

And the second thing is to go a little deeper: quieting the mind and, and to actually listen. Most of us are not very good at listening. Most people say that when we communicate we do one of two things: we're either speaking or waiting to speak.

[Congregation laughs]

Ever been in a conversation with someone and you could tell they weren't listening? Were you ever in a conversation where you weren't listening?

[Congregation laughs]

And we all have this common thing. I bet you've heard somebody say in your life, *"You know, he just doesn't listen."* *"She doesn't listen."* *"My kids just don't listen."* *"My boss doesn't listen."*

Everybody knows somebody in our life who doesn't listen. And yet, the amazing thing is, when we don't listen, we miss out on so much. Miss out on connection. We miss out on true understanding and insights.

Anybody ever have a gut feeling to do something and you ignored it totally and did the opposite thing and thought, "Ah, geeze. *Why didn't I listen to myself?*" Whether it's in making decisions in relationships, or what we eat, or investments, it is amazing how we don't go deeper and actually listen to ourselves. We don't listen to each other, and we don't listen to ourselves as well as we know we could. And, certainly, we don't always listen to God, even though it says, "*Listen to that still, small voice of God.*"

How often do you hear, in the New Testament, Jesus say, "*They have ears, but do not hear.*" Because we don't listen. You know, we don't listen! The entire theme of the Old Testament is that the children of Israel: when they listened to God, things went well. When they didn't, things didn't go so well. If you look at every single leader – Noah or Abraham or David – they all listened to God. They listened.

You know, the greatest commandment is to love God with all our heart, mind, soul and strength, and the second is to love others as ourselves. Paul Tillich, a 1930's theologian, said that the true first law of love is to listen. And so let's redo the greatest commandments: the first being that it is to listen to God with all your heart, mind, soul, and strength, and to listen to others as we listen to ourselves. You know, the greatest sign of love is how well we really listen: not just always projecting things, but being open to receive and hear what is going on.

There is an Infinite Intelligence available and accessible to all of us. The question is: are we tuned in? There is an Infinite Intelligence. The question is: we aware and are we present to it? And are we open and willing to be receptive to it and actually use it in our lives? The Universe is available and it is calling and it's accessible. The question is: are we listening to it.

So the White Stone Ceremony is kind of built on the idea that – A – God has a plan and purpose for our lives; and that there is Infinite Good available to us and the way to do it is to quiet our mind and tune in and to listen.

The White Stone Ceremony was created by the Rev. David Williamson, and I'll put up the Scripture it's based on: Revelations 2, verse 17. And let me just read it to you, and then we'll kind of analyze it a little bit more. It says, "*Let anyone who has an ear, listen to what the Spirit is saying to the churches. To everyone who conquers, I will give some of the hidden manna, and I will give a white stone, and on the white stone is written a new name that no one knows except the one who receives it.*"

So, let's look at the first two sentences. They begin, "*Let anyone who has an ear, listen, and to everyone who conquers, or who overcomes...*" Really what it is saying is that Spirit is available to everyone: to anyone and everyone. There is no one who is denied access.

However, there are some things we need to do. The first thing is you need to be willing to listen. And, second, it says, "overcome." And what it means by that is: to anyone who wants to move forward with their lives and not be stuck in the past. Anyone who is willing to grow. Anyone who is willing to be transformed and to improve and to make progress from wherever they are. If you're willing to listen and conquer and move forward with your life towards greater things, that you'll get three things.

The first one is **hidden manna**. Remember: manna was the bread that the children of Israel were given every single day to nourish them. The interesting thing about that was that were told, *“Do not save it. It’s daily bread. Eat it daily.”* And what did they do? They saved it. And it went bad. What it is saying is that you will get your daily nourishment! Daily, you will know what is yours to do!

Most of us want to know every single step... And we don’t want to start until we know the entire plan and we have all our ducks in a row. Anybody like that at all?

[Congregation laughs]

You know! And so the children of Israel were so impatient they thought, *“Oh, let me save up. Let me save it.”* And we think we need to know everything, and we don’t. You just need to know the next step. And to do that next step, and then you’ll get the other step. It’s like that *Raiders of the Lost Ark* thing, where he’s trying to get across the path. And only when he put his foot out did a stone come out to support him. And that’s how life is: it’ll be there; just trust it! Just take that next step that you know, and then the following steps will come forth. That nourishment and guidance will be there.

And the second one it says is they will be given a **white stone**. And a white stone back in those ancient times actually represented freedom. When anyone was released from prison, they were given a white stone to prove that they were actually free. Symbolically, for us, it means that we are free. And it sounds ridiculous and obvious, but the fact is: sometimes we don’t think we’re free. Sometimes we think we’re trapped. We think we’re stuck. We think we’re limited: that nothing’s going to change or improve or get better in our lives. And that’s really not true! We are free! In every moment, we can choose our attitude. We can choose to be optimistic or pessimistic or positive or negative. We can choose to be kind. We can choose to be caring. We can choose to set goals and intentions. We can choose anything we want! We really *are* free! And this white stone in your hand is to remind you of that truth that we sometimes forget. It seems so obvious, but we sometimes don’t feel it inside of ourselves.

So when we’re willing to listen and move forward with our lives, we will get the nourishment and guidance we need daily. And we will be reminded that we are free to choose, to create, to show up in new and different ways.

And then the final one says that they will be given a **new name**. And a name in the Bible represented your nature or your purpose. You know, Moses’ name means “to draw out.” He was drawn out of the Nile. He also drew the children of Israel out of Egypt: out of slavery and bondage. A name kind of represents what you are here to do or what quality that you embody and express.

When you see someone’s name change in the Bible, it means that their goal or their intention changed. Their consciousness changed for how they’re meant to show up in a new way. Paul changed from Saul to Paul, because he went from being angry to joyously preaching the Gospel. There was a change in him. And sometimes we are being called to make a change in our mindset, in our attitude, and how we show up. Maybe it’s a new part of our lives and we’re meant to comfort. Or we’re meant to lead. Or we’re meant to stand firm. Whatever it is, there is something we’re being called to do: that our soul knows it is time now. And sometimes there might be a change of how we’re showing up now. Sometimes it could be a deepening of how we’re showing up now. But something is calling us. Our soul is calling us to a higher version and a greater fulfillment of who we came here to be.

And a change of name doesn't mean like, *"Oh, yeah; my name's now Bob."* It is actually usually represented by a quality or some aspect. Yours could be something like to forgive. It could be to heal. It could be to inspire. It could be to let go. It could be to move forward. It could be to soar. I don't know what it is, but your soul does! The question is: are we willing to quiet our minds and listen so we get this insight and wisdom that's inside to move our lives forward in a greater way.

The last line said, *"And no one knows it except the one who receives it."* And the fact is: no one can go to your secret place for you. Nobody can experience God for you. Somebody once said, *"You have to do it for yourself and you can't do it alone."* We get to support each other and encourage each other: just like we do in being right in here together, encouraging each other. But, ultimately, you have to go to that place yourself. No one can go to that secret place for you. No one can feel love for you. No one can do any of those spiritual, deeper things for you. We have to do it ourselves, and we will receive it. Not ask somebody what it is; we need to find it ourselves.

A better life is available to all of us! And goals and all those things are fabulous, but a deeper and more profound way – that accesses more genius that we can ever think – is to quiet our minds and listen.

So what we're going to do is, we're going to enter into a little time of meditation. And even if, this time, nothing may happen, just enjoy the quietness, and quiet your mind, and it will do good. For some of you, an idea, a picture, a thought might come, and that's great. And if it doesn't, don't worry; you're doing the right thing. Because it's about creating a system of quieting the mind and a practice of listening regularly, and things will begin to flow.

So, if it's your first time, don't worry about pressuring yourself that you're supposed to feel this or that. Just make yourself available. Because just doing this, maybe when you're driving, or later in the week, something will come to you. And I recommend doing this with some consistency and frequency. Daily would be ideal! But whatever it is will make your life better. Things will flow better when you take time to quiet your mind and listen.

So everyone, just take a deep breath now. And let's close our eyes as we just listen to this song to help us enter into a time of meditation.

[Guest Artist Sean Mullaney sings:] "Something's calling me. Something's calling me. Something's calling me. It'll be deeper than I ever been before."

So everyone just take a deep breath. And just open your heart and your mind with the intention to just relax. Just relax into God. Relax into the knowledge that God loves you. That God created you. That God has an amazing plan and purpose for your life. There's so much more good, so much more love, so much more peace and fulfillment available to you still.

So take a deep breath, expanding your heart and your mind into that great truth. As we just relax and let go – quieting our minds, relaxing our bodies and just opening ourselves to feel God's presence – don't try to figure out what that's supposed to be feeling like. Just open yourself to that feeling. Open a space. And if you feel like it, you can just say to yourself, *"God, what is my next spiritual step? What is that thing that you want me to embody and express more of in this new year? What direction, what purpose do you want me to pursue at this time?"*

Something is calling you... And it is your soul calling you towards greater fulfillment and happiness, to living your most authentic life, to loving in the most pure and joyous way. That you are meant to love. That you are meant to show up. So just quiet your mind and open your heart, and just be willing to be still and listen. And something may or may not come to you, and that's okay. But just the activity of quieting your mind, and having the intention to listen to God, will open a space. And it *will* come. It may be now, it may be later, but it will come.

So, everyone take a deep breath. And let's just send this out with our hearts open. And let's be still and listen.

[Quiet space]

If something comes to you, feel free to write it on your stone. And if it doesn't, just continue to enjoy the silence and quiet your mind. And know that good things are to come.

[Quiet space]

And so now let's just give thanks – even for this brief time – to commune and connect with that living activity of Spirit; to connecting to that field of Infinite Possibilities. If your word or your name came, just give thanks for that. And if it didn't, we give thanks in advance that it will be revealed in its right and perfect time. We give thanks for all the blessings in our lives. We give thanks for all the good that is still to come. And we give thanks for a great new year. So we pray this and affirm this through the name of the living spirit of God. Amen.

Like Napoleon Hill and all the individuals who have gone deeper, we realize that we all have access to this Infinite Intelligence available to all of us. The question is: are we willing to tap into it and do the work that's needed for it?

You know, so much is available to us! The question is: are we willing to be still and tune in? And are we willing to quiet our minds and listen? There's so much available out there for us; it's amazing! We just need to access it! Because the truth is: something's calling you to be better than you've ever been before. Are you willing to go there?

God bless you all!

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