

LISTEN AND LEARN

Feb. 19, 2020

Rev. Richard Rogers

Rev. Richard Rogers: How many of you want to be life-long learners? So, if you want to be a life-long learner, what do you think is the most important aspect of learning?

[Congregation murmurs]

How many want to vote for curiosity? How many want to vote for listening? See, I believe it's listening. Did you say it...? Somebody said it. I absolutely – I don't know if it's because the... Did we have the big screen? Shoot that up there.

I don't know if you saw that, right? You didn't; we didn't give it away. But here's what I want us to see is that I believe that listening is the most important part of learning. And I believe that what's going on in the world today, that listening is getting harder and harder to do. Because there's more and more screaming going on. Right? There's so much information being shot at us from all directions that it's actually getting harder to listen, because the amount of noise is becoming more and more difficult to discern.

Now, let me ask you: if somebody's listening to you, do you ever scream at them? Probably not, right? Because, if they're listening, you don't have to raise your voice. But when the world feels like they're not being listened to, we naturally start raising our voice, and things just get louder and louder and louder.

So today, I want us to really look at how well you are listening. And I really want you to look at three different levels. I want to see how well you're listening to the people around you; how well you're listening to yourself; and, most importantly, how well you're listening to God. Like, are you taking time to listen to God on a regular basis? Do you know the difference between inner guidance and the burrito you had for lunch?

[Congregation laughs]

Right? Because they're not the same! Right? And sometimes, when we're not really sure about listening to the Spirit of God within us, we don't really like we're being guided and directed in a meaningful and powerful way. So, do you know what God sounds like in your soul? When God is speaking directly to you?

How many of you still listen to the radio? Anybody still listen to the radio? Now, if I got on to your radio and changed your radio station, would you probably be able to figure it out? If you listen to talk radio and I had rap on, or if you listen to classical music and I had jazz on, would you be able to tell that somebody started messing with your dial? Yes! Probably so, right? And if you listen to the same radio station over and over again, you actually begin to know the sound of the music that's playing. Maybe even the name of the DJ, or even the commercials that play. You get attuned to listening to what's being played.

And what I want you to see is that inner guidance is very much like that. The more you listen – the more you really dedicate yourself to listening to the voice of God within you – the more you can discern its

subtleties. Because it's called "the still, small voice." Because God never screams at you. Even when God wants to scream at you – and that may be a projection on my part...

[Congregation laughs]

... but even when God wants to scream at you, God doesn't scream at you. So why doesn't God scream at you? Why doesn't God scream at you?

[Congregation murmurs]

A little louder, if you're going to say it... Come on, if you're going to play, play big!

[Congregation shouts out answers]

Because God wants you to listen... No, because God wants you to have free will! Right? Because we have free will, do we have the God-given right to not listen? Yes! Do we have the God-given right to go in the wrong direction? Yes! Do we have a God-given right to just blow up our life at any whim? Yes! Over and over again, we get to be as self-destructive as we want to be! But over and over again, we can actually choose to listen to the voice of God within us, and go in the direction that is the most joyous, the most abundant, the happiest, healthiest, most wonderful direction. But we actually have to slow down and listen. Because for most of us – at 90 miles an hour – it's hard to discern Divine guidance. Because your adrenalin is pumping so fast, that's all you hear; that's all you feel.

So if you take a breath, and you begin to listen, what are you listening for?

See, I believe that most of us have something that we're listening for in our lives. And for some of us, we're listening for, "Am I right?" or "Am I being respected?" or "Am I being agreed with?" or "Am I smart enough?" or "Am I good enough?" or "Am I pretty enough?" or "Am I wanted?" I believe that all of us – in one way or another – there's a question that our humanity is asking. And we ask that question almost to the entire world, hoping that we listen for that answer that affirms what we want to hear.

Over and over again, I just want you to become conscious of the question that you're asking. Because for us to hear, we really need to know what we're asking for!

Some of you remember when my daughter, Ari, was about 14 months old, she had croup. And if you've ever had a child with croup, they make this, like, barking sound... and it's awful. And her mom came to me at about 2:30 in the morning and said, "We've got to go. Ari's esophagus is closing because of the croup, and we're going." And we're just going! So she threw the keys at me. We got in the little mini-van. And I didn't know those could really go that fast!

[Congregation laughs]

We drove down to John C. Lincoln; it's now Banner Health North, something, or whatever it is. John C. Lincoln. We drove down to John C. Lincoln. And I gathered them up, got them in the ER. We kind of gave them our name as we ran by. And the doctor said, "*I don't feel qualified to do a trach on an infant, and so we are going to airlift you to Children's Hospital.*" And, at the time, it was downtown at Banner. "*And we're going to airlift you down there, because I don't want to do a trach on a 14-month-old.*" And he said, "*But what you need to know is that, once you get in the helicopter, they will not do a trach. Like, I don't want to do it – I want you to have a surgeon that does this all the time – but, once you get in that helicopter, they will not do a trach on a child in a moving helicopter. They just won't do it. So, if you*

agree to do this, there's this nine-minute window from the time you take off to the time you land, where you're up... You just need to know this."

And so, we signed the paper and, literally, the helicopter had just landed; they were bringing somebody into John C. Lincoln. And, by the time I got back to where I had totally just illegally parked... By the time I got back in the mini-van, the helicopter was taking off. And at 2:30 in the morning, I got on the phone to my prayer partners, and I said, *"Okay; I know it's 2:30 in the morning, but you've got to start praying."* And I drove – are there any highway patrol officers or police officers here?

[Congregation and Rev. Rogers laugh]

I drove like a bat out of hell! I mean, I just drove like a crazy man down 7th Street as fast as I could. And got there. By the time I got there – they were there minutes, felt like hours, before I was... By the time I got there, the doctor said, *"We don't need to do anything; the esophagus opened up."* And is that the answer to prayer? I believe so! But it was the answer... it was... Thank you, God!

And before that day, I was a heavy sleeper. And I had the ability to fall asleep literally before my head hit the pillow. I was snoring before I was asleep, right?

[Congregation laughs]

And that day, I got so scared at thinking that, when I went to bed that night, I did not hear my child – that I didn't hear her – that I made a personal commitment... And I didn't do it consciously... But I made a commitment to become a very light sleeper. And from that day to this day, if the dog gets up, I know it. Like, if something rattles outside, I'm awake. And it was because I got so scared in that moment, that I developed super dad hearing. Right? And it was a reaction to being profoundly scared. It was. It was just a reaction to being profoundly scared. But I began to listen in a whole new way. I began to listen in a way that – even when I was sound asleep – my dad hearing was still... So when the kids came home late...

[Congregation laughs]

Dad hearing was on! It was game on! Right? And over and over again, what I want you to see is that we actually train ourselves for what we listen to. And because we have this ability, it becomes so important that – not only what we're listening to – but what we're listening for. What is it that you're really all about?

And, so, some of us – the question that we ask ourselves – is really the wrong question. Like, have you ever said to the Universe, *"What's wrong with me?"* Or have you ever said to the Universe, *"Why isn't my life working?"* or *"Why can't I get the love that I want?"* or *"Why can't I have nice things?"* or *"Why can't I ever catch a break?"*

And what I want you to see is that, for some of us, the dominant question that we're putting out into the Universe – that we're listening for – is a question that we don't really want the answer to! It's not really what we want? What we want is actually the opposite of what we're asking for? But because we're asking a bad question – and asking a bad question over and over again – the Universe can't give us better information. Because the question that we're asking is actually the wrong question!

If you're asking over and over again, *"What's wrong with me?"* what's the Universe supposed to say? How would Infinite Love answer that question, *"What's wrong with you?"* Because God doesn't see anything wrong with you! And even though you believe at some level that there's something wrong with you – that you're broken or that you're not enough or that something's not working – when you go to the Universe and you ask that question, how is the infinite Mind of God supposed to answer a bad question? Even though you ask it 100 times?

And what I want you to see today is that, as we learn to listen, we also need to be willing to change the question that we're putting out to the infinite Mind of God. Because if we ask a bad question, we're going to get a bad response! If you say to everybody at some level – unconsciously to everyone you meet – *"What's wrong with me?"* you're going to get feedback, and you're only going to believe that story more and more: that something's wrong with you. And even though there's nothing wrong with you – even though you were created in the image and likeness of God – when you ask a bad question over and over and over again, you just begin to believe it more and more and more. And you listen for the Universe to tell you what's wrong with you.

Well, what if we change the question?!? What if – instead of asking, *"What's wrong with me?"* or *"Why doesn't my life work?"* – what if we asked the question, *"What's the easiest way for me to be wildly blessed?"* Or, *"How is it that I got to be so gorgeous?"*

[Congregation and Rev. Rogers laugh]

Or whatever the question is! I just want you to pick a better question! *"How do I live fully alive?"* *"How can I move to a higher and higher level of abundance?"* *"What would be the easiest way for me to make a million dollars?"* I don't care what your question is, but just ask a much better question that is actually worthy of the time and the attention of the infinite Mind of God! To give you an answer that is better than the silly questions that we ask that are degrading and demeaning.

Over and over again, what do you want to know? In Jeremiah 33... something.

[Congregation laughs]

Jeremiah 33:3. It says this: *"Call to me, and I will answer you. And I will tell you great, unsearchable things that you do not know."*

Can I read that one more time? *"Call to me, and I will answer you, and tell you great, unsearchable things that you do not know."*

Like, if you have access to the infinite Mind of God, right? It's kind of like Google.

[Congregation laughs]

Do you ever Google dumb stuff?

[Congregation laughs]

Like, we have access to the entire level of wisdom in the Universe, and we Google three-legged dog pictures!

[Congregation laughs]

Or we just ask for the silliest things on Google, because we just are trying to entertain ourselves. And if you just want to entertain yourself, ask why you're so messed up!

[Congregation laughs]

Right? It won't be the truth; it will be less than the highest and the best. But if you're going to waste a great question in the infinite Mind of God, make it a good one! Right?

But for most of us, we want to live a better life. The whole theme for this year is "Elevate Your Life." That if you want to elevate your life to the next level, I want you to be really conscious of the question that you're asking the Universe. And not asking questions that are beneath the beloved child of God that you are.

If you want to live a greater life – if you want to experience abundance or health or joy or relationships... Like, if you're asking over and over again, *"Why can't I find a great guy?"* what's the Universe supposed to say to you? Well, it's because you're asking the wrong question! Right? Ask a better question! *"What is the easiest way for me to find my soulmate?"* That's a better question! And then the Universe begins to move in that direction! Of actually connecting you. If you want your soulmate, then the Universe moves you in that direction. *"How do I live in the highest level of abundance?"* Or, *"How do I heal my body?"* Or, *"How do I live in perfect health?"* Or, *"How do I make amends to my family for the things that I've done in the past?"* Or whatever it is... but just ask a better question that actually takes you in the direction that you want to go.

Over and over and over again, what I want you to see is that we really do have access to the Mind of God. It's no small thing! And I guess you could ask for the winning lottery numbers...

[Congregation laughs]

I've tried... You might be better at it than I am... Right?

[Congregation laughs]

But the real kicker is: I want you to begin to see that there's a level of Divine wisdom available to your soul that, when you get your question right, is really stunning. But most of us have never been conscious of the question that we're putting out to life. Most of us have never taken time to really articulate that question in a way that really allows us to get what we want. And we didn't really believe that – even if we did articulate a good question – that it would be the Universe's joy to give us a better answer.

So if you told yourself the truth this week, what do you want? What is it that your soul really came to know? Do you want to know greater love or joy or abundance? What do you want? Let's ask for that! Let's ask for that in a way that allows God to reveal your way. *"God, show me the way to my next great job!"* or *"Open the door to the relationship, so we really meet my spiritual needs."* Whatever you want, I want you to really form it...

You know, it's like *Jeopardy*. It has to be in the form of a question, right? Because if you're telling God the answer, you've kind of missed the whole spiritual point. You ask God a question; God reveals the answer. And then you take the steps. And it never really gets more difficult than that! You ask the Infinite a question; Spirit reveals it; and then you take the steps. Then you ask the next question; God reveals the answer; and you take the steps, right?

But there's a couple of key parts that are yours. Your job – because you have free will – is to ask the question. Nobody else gets to ask your question for you. And if you form a bad question – if you ask a bad question – it's going to be junk in and junk out. Garbage in, garbage out. But if you ask a good question – a really good question – “How” as opposed to “Why,” right? “How do I get there? How do I live?” And really form it in the question of what you really want.

Now, asking the question is the first step, right? What's the next step?

[Congregation murmurs]

Listening! Somebody's paying attention! Thank you, Mark! Listening, right? Then you've got to listen! And then what's the third part of this equation?

[Congregation murmurs]

Yeah! Then you go into action! You ASK; you LISTEN; and you DO. It doesn't get more complicated than that! It just doesn't! You ask for your greatest heart's desire. You listen for the response. Now, will the response always make sense? No! Sometimes it doesn't make sense at all! Sometimes it'll seem wacky! Sometimes it's seem absurd! But you ask for the highest level of good that you can imagine. You listen to the Mind of God; you listen to the voice of God within you; you listen to the truth of your soul. And then you've got to act. Over and over again: ASK, LISTEN, ACT. That's it.

So guess what your homework is for this week? ASK, LISTEN, ACT. That's all I want from your little life. That you can literally go in any direction. You can unleash an unlimited amount of good if you just remember the simple little formula: ASK for what you want. LISTEN for the response from the Universe. And then put it into ACTION. But you're required to do all three. If you miss one step, that's a big piece. You've got to do all three.

Will you take it into prayer with me?

We open our mind, our heart, our soul to a new question: to a very new question. To be willing to ask for our heart's desire: our greatest level of good. For the life that we've really been craving and desiring above all things. And we ask. And then we listen. And then we put that into action every day. We act from the highest Truth we know. So in the name and through the power of the Living Christ, we give thanks. And so it is. Amen.

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