

THE POWER OF AFFIRMATIONS

May 10, 2020

Rev. Richard Maraj

Rev. Richard Maraj: Good morning, everyone, and welcome to Unity of Phoenix Spiritual Center's Sunday worship celebration. First, just want to wish a happy Mother's Day to all our moms out there. So to the birth moms, the adoptive moms, the step moms, to anyone who raised and reared a child in any way, we just send you our love, our thanks, our appreciation for all the love and support and nurturing and great work that you've done. We also remember our moms if they've passed on: all the love and all the great things that they contributed to our lives. So our appreciation and our love, and happy Mother's Day to all moms.

Today we have Rusty Ferracane providing our music, and we're going to jump right into it with Rev. Lori leading us in a time of meditation.

MEDITATION

Rev. Lori Fleming: I invite you to close your outer eyes. To take in a deep, cleansing breath and release it slowly. To take in another deep, cleansing breath, and let it go as we move into that quiet, still place within. Away from the outer, we move into the inner. Away from any stresses or strains that are appearing in the outer world, we gently let them go as we move our awareness within. Nothing on the outside is real; the true reality is at the very depths of our hearts, as we make a connection with the Divine at that soul level, where we are one with God, and we are one with each other. We don't have to be physically present with our friends and loved ones to carry them in our hearts. In this time when we are spending a lot of time in our homes, we can take extra time to pray, to meditate, to commune with Spirit: that true reality of our Source. When we spend time within, we spiritualize every cell in our body, as God's light fills us with health and vitality and wholeness, for that is our birthright. And no matter what goes on in the outer world, in the inner world we are safe and protected and loved unconditionally by God, because we are God's beloved. And God is our Source, and we know that we have been promised the kingdom of heaven, which is within us now.

And so in this time when things seem to be just a little bit out of whack, we go within, knowing that inside is peace; is God's presence, and we are one with the All. And we send thoughts of health and wholeness across the planet, to all of humanity; to every plant; to every animal; to the Earth itself. As we pray that we all rise up in health; that we all are whole and complete, just the way we are.

And in this special time where we commune with God, we are perfected. We are loved. And we have all the strength and power and wisdom we need to move forward into this day. And so, God, we say thank you for creating us. Thank you for loving us. And now we move more deeply into the silence, where we feel the presence of God within.

SILENCE

And so, God, we come in gratitude for this time together; for all of the blessings that you've given us; for each other; for our friendships and our family; for our health and wholeness; and for being alive in this time and space. We are truly grateful! And so we say thank you, God; thank you, God; thank you, God! And it is so. Amen.

SONG:

Rusty Ferracane: 'Home' (accompanied by Craig Bohmler on piano)

When I think of home
I think of a place where there's love overflowing
I wish I was home
I wish I was back there with the things I've been knowing

Wind that makes the tall trees bend into leaning
Suddenly the raindrops that fall have a meaning
Sprinklin' the scene, makes it all clean

Maybe there's a chance for me to go back
Now that I have some direction
It would sure be nice to be back home
Where there's love and affection
And just maybe I can convince time to slow up
Giving me enough time in my life to grow up
Time be my friend, let me start again

Suddenly my world's gone and changed its face
But I still know where I'm going
I have had my mind spun around in space
And yet I've watched it growing

And, If you're list'ning God
Please don't make it hard to know
If we should believe the things that we see
Tell us, should we run away
Or should we try and stay
Or would it be better just to let things be?

Living here, in this brand new world
Might be a fantasy
But it taught me to love
So it's real: it's real to me

And I've learned
That we must look inside our hearts to find
A world full of love
Like yours
Like mine
Like home...

MESSAGE

Rev. Richard Maraj: [Applauds] Thank you, Rusty; thank you, Craig! Another fabulous job! Thank you, guys, so much!

Alright. So Little Johnny's dad just put him to bed, and within two or three minutes, he yelled down the stairs to his dad, "Dad! Can you get me a glass of water?" And his dad said, "Johnny, you had time for that. Now it's time to go to sleep." And then a minute later he yells, "Hey, Dad! Can you get me a glass of water?" And his dad said, "Johnny! I told you! You already had a chance, so don't ask me again." Couple more minutes go by: "Dad! Can you get me a glass of water?" He said, "Johnny, just stop this

now. If you say anything again to me, I'm going to come upstairs and give you a spanking." And a short bit of silence. Says, *"Hey, Dad! When you're coming up to spank me, can you bring me a glass of water?"* **[Chuckles]** Persistent Little Johnny!

So this morning we are going to talk about two spiritual practices: two important spiritual tools to help us improve our lives.

And the first one is **AFFIRMATIONS**. I'm sure everyone is familiar with affirmations; I'm sure we all use affirmations in our lives. And know that affirmations are positive statements of the good and the things that we want to attract and call forth in our lives.

So here are a couple of examples: *"I am positive, peaceful and prosperous."* *"Abundance comes to me in expected and unexpected ways."* *"Even when things go wrong, things still work out well for me."* *"I am a powerful creator; I create the life I want, and I enjoy it."* *"I forgive freely and easily, and can let go of the past."* *"All my relationships are healthy, nurturing and loving."* *"Each and every day, in each and every way, my life is getting better and better and better."* Why don't you join me on that one? *"Each and every day, in each and every way, my life is getting better and better and better."*

One thing I love about affirmations is it just lifts our energy; it raises our vibration. It gives clarity on what it is that we desire, and really helps the spiritual energy attract and manifest the good that we desire.

We do affirmations, and they really work in our lives, especially when we really connect and resonate with them. When we say them, they uplift us, make us feel good, and that we believe it is possible. But studies actually show that there are times that affirmations don't work for us... and, in fact, they actually create more unhappiness and frustration. And that is when we speak affirmations that we aren't connected with: that we don't believe is possible... That we may not even necessarily want... That when it's just rote, it tends not to work as well.

Let me give you an example. We could affirm, *"I am happy, wealthy and good enough."* But if there's a little part of us that says, *"Yeah, right,"* you can see that it's probably not going to stick and manifest in our lives. Or if we say something like, *"I am calm and peaceful in rush hour traffic,"* and you're like, *"Who am I kidding?"* If that voice in our head is really against – or doesn't believe or isn't comfortable or connected – with the affirmation, we are less likely to attract it. Because there's a gap of belief between where we are currently and what our desired outcome is. So we'll talk a little bit about how to close that gap a little bit later.

So the second thing we're going to talk about is the power of questions. You know, I learned about the power of questions many years ago from my karate instructor and mentor. And he once told me: he said, *"Richard, the questions you ask yourself are really powerful. And so if you ever want to know something that you don't know, write it down on a pad of paper – that question – before you go to sleep. And then, when you go to sleep, your mind will find out the answer, and it'll bring it to you."* And I tried for a while, and did it, and it really does work!

And I think we know and practice it a lot. Like, have you ever had a question, and you asked yourself a question like, *"What was the name of that character on Gilligan's Island? The rich millionaire guy?"* And then you couldn't figure it out. And then the next day you're driving, and it's like, *"Thurston Howell III!"* It came to you just like that!

And the question is: Why does that happen? And it is because questions are catalysts that set into motion the power of the subconscious mind and universal forces to attract what it is that we are seeking. Everybody knows the Socratic method of learning is based on the idea... the word "educate" means to draw out. And Socrates believed that there is wisdom in us already and question draw out that knowledge.

One of my favorite quotes is a Cameroonian quote, and it says, *“He who asks the question cannot avoid the answer.”* Our minds are kind of like heat-seeking missiles: when you set it on something, it will work to figure it out.

And so, in the same way that affirmations work – and then sometimes there are ways that it’s not as effective – questions, in the same way, do work... but sometimes they’re not as effective. The quality of our lives is impacted by the quality of the questions we ask. So sometimes we ask very powerful questions that draw out good, and sometimes we ask disempowering questions that bring out more negativity.

Here are some examples of questions that are not very empowering and don’t give us positive results: *“Why me??? Why is this happening again?” “Why are people so mean?!?” “Why is it that I always seem to choose the wrong person?” “Why can’t I seem to get my life together?” “Why is everybody else happy in their relationships, except me?”*

Now, any of this sound familiar? I bet every single one of us has some phrase like that that we use. And what it does – it actually disempowers us! *“Why is this happening?”* shows, at some level, we believe that we don’t have any power or we don’t have any control. In fact, *“Why?”* questions like this create a cyclical nature of attracting more of the thing we don’t want by keeping asking those questions. You know, *“Why can’t I get a break?” “Why don’t things ever work out?”*

And so I really want you to think: what are the questions like that that are disempowering that we say habitually? Because we’re going to transform them in a little bit.

You know, two of the things that affect our lives the most are the words that we speak to ourselves and the words we speak to others. And the second thing are the questions we ask ourselves, and the questions that we ask to others.

Affirmations and questions are powerful, but we’ve got to use them effectively. In his book, *The Book of Affirmations*, Noah St. John encourages us to use the power of these two things. To use affirmations, but use the power of questions to help attract and activate our energies to make them happen. And instead of affirmations, he calls them **AFFIRMATIONS**, because the word “affirm” means to make firm... to form and to transform. And so, by utilizing the power of both, we can actually magnify our ability to attract and create greater things.

So let’s look at the process. **The first one is to get clear on what you want.** We’ve heard it over and over again: *“Ask and ye shall receive; seek and ye shall find; knock and the door will be opened unto you.”* All those statements – and *“Decide upon a thing and it will be established for you”* – all of them are really saying: What do you want? What do you want to achieve? What do you want to experience? What do you want to create? What do you want to have? What do you want to become?

You know, we’re so busy in life, we actually don’t always take the time to get clear about what we want. And even on those times when we’ve created lists of goals and intentions, as weeks and months go by, situations have changed, and we don’t go back and revise what it is that we want.

There’s a line in Scripture that says, *“Many are called, but few are chosen.”* And I believe it’s many are called, but few choose. Few choose to get intentional and clear, and to really decide and make a choice of what it is that we actually want. You know, the fact is that we are creators! We’re not bystanders in life; it’s part of our role and our responsibility to actually be clear and hold an intention: to ask and seek.

In the Book of Genesis, it says God gave us dominion and authority over all things and said, *“Be fruitful and multiply.”* God didn’t say, *“Hey, sit there and just kind of pray and hope you get a lucky break.”* That is not the way it goes! Yet sometimes that’s how we kind of live our lives.

To ask, seek and knock: what does it begin with? It begins with desire. Desire is the beginning. In the Hindu text, the Rigveda, it says that desire is the first seed of the mind. Desire is the first seed of the mind! Which begs the question for all of us to answer: What is it that I want? What is it that you desire? What is it that you'd like to create and experience and enjoy?

And so, whether it is a new house, a new car, or a ham sandwich, it is all available to us; we just have to get clear and to actually express what it is that we actually want. It can be increased finances, more love and intimacy; it could be to feel more joy and fulfillment or a sense of purpose. It's all available to us; the question is: Are we taking the time to get clear about what it is that we actually want.

So ask and ye shall receive! And it's really saying: Get clear about what it is you want. Get clear about your desires, and you will begin a process of creating and attracting those things.

Now the second step... And what we should really do is make a list of five or 10 things that we really want, and write them down. **And then the next part is to create an AFFIRMATION ... and that is to use the power of the affirmation and the power of the question to actually magnify the power and to attract what we want.**

When you think about it, every problem – or every desire – at some level is an unanswered question. And so, we need to begin to take those negative assumptions – “*Why is this happening to me?*” “*Why don't things work out?*” “*Why am I always broke?*” – and just flip them into a question that's actually positive. Instead of “*Why am I so unhappy?*” why not say, “*Why am I so happy?*” “*Why do I always have enough money?*” “*Why do I feel worthy of love and happiness and success?*” “*Why did I double my income?*” “*Why do I like myself so much?*” “*Why do I enjoy my life and appreciate it so much?*” “*Why do things work out so easily for me?*” “*Why am I able to lose weight and exercise in a way that's joyful and positive?*”

See, by flipping these – and putting a question to it – two things are happening. The first one... Because when we say things like, “*Why am I so unhappy?*” or “*Nobody loves me*” that's really not true. We're making a blanket statement generalization. When you say, “*Why am I so lovable?*” or “*Why do I have money?*” you actually begin to see the areas in your life where that actually is true. That there is some good.

And the second thing asking the question does... Again, it kind of triggers that mechanism. You know, because our minds are like Google. You know, if you put it on something, it will search! So it sets you in motion to figure out why: “*Why is my life working?*” “*Why are these things so successful?*” “*Why am I experiencing prosperity?*” “*Why is my relationship getting better?*” Because we're setting it into motion; it is actually triggering really, really good and positive things.

So we need to make sure we use these questions in a very empowering way. So: “*How do I create more success in my career?*” “*How do I lose weight and make the experience actually kind of fun?*” “*How can I find what my purpose is?*” Just asking these questions are good! “*Why do I always get a good night's sleep?*” Whatever it is, trigger it with a question.

And here's the interesting thing: “*How*” questions are good. “*How do I work this?*” “*How can I be more successful?*” But actually – when you think about it – “*Why*” questions are actually more powerful than “*How*.” Because “*Why*” goes to the motive; “*How*” goes to the method. You can say, “*How can I become rich?*” or “*Why have I become rich?*” And you actually go a little deeper and activate the different possibilities and the different avenues when you ask a “*Why*” question.

And so, “*Why is this so fun?*” “*How come these good things always seem to happen to me?*” When you put it out there in that form, it actually is working on our subconscious – well beyond saying it – to create greater success. And the more we're able to connect with it, we actually close that gap from what we are saying to what we are experiencing: from our current situation to our desired results.

And so it's important that we take the list we've written and rewrite them with the positive questions, and then actually read them. And say them. And even listen to them.

Same karate instructor many years ago told me to record an affirmation to myself and play it as I slept. So I would say, *"Well, I am positive and prosperous,"* and I would actually listen to myself tell myself how prosperous or joyful I was. And so we could actually speak these things, and also have someone very close – like a prayer partner – say it to us, or we could even just speak them to ourselves. So that we're writing it; we're reading it; we're saying it; and we are listening to it. Because that will really help. It will open a space to close that gap of disbelief, of disconnect.

In Scripture it says, *"Whatever you ask in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours."* And it's that place of believing it: that you can accept it; you can see it; you can feel it; you can own it; and you can become it in consciousness. And sometimes that takes a little time, but it's in that process – of writing it; of saying it; of listening to it – that it can really help us have that connection.

I'm sure we've all at times said, *"I just can't see myself having that or doing that."* Well, this one is changing it to, *"I can see myself and feel myself and accept myself having that."*

And so the final part of the process is to get moving and take action. When we have a mindset and an assumption, our actions springboard off of it. Like, if we think, *"Things never work out for me,"* what kind of actions do you think we're going to have? And how effective will that be? Compared to, *"Things seem to always work for my highest good!"* Those actions tend to be more positive. But no mistake: affirmations and questions are powerful, but it needs some legs to it. It needs some action.

John F. Kennedy once said, *"Things just don't happen; they are made to happen."* Things take action. They take perseverance.

A great football coach once said, *"Everybody has the will to win; not everybody has the will to prepare."* And the fact is, anything you want in life, you can ask and affirm as much as you want, but at some point the rubber has to hit the road, and you have to do the work.

So what is it that you want enough – that you desire enough – that you would do the work for it? That you would put the effort for it? Because it's when we find those things – those connections of desire and feeling the gap and believing it – our actions flow out a lot easier. It becomes more joyful. It becomes a part of that process. Even when we aren't getting the right results initially – and nobody gets it right the first time. You look at any great, successful person, they had to keep working it. Keep working it. Keep the desire; keep believing it.

You know, Jack Canfield and Mark Victor Hansen: remember their whole *Chicken Soup for the Soul* thing? And you'd think, *"Wow! Inspirational stories! Everybody would want to publish it!"* Well, they had 144 "no's" before they hit the 145th, where they got a "yes." But they so believed in what they wanted, they knew they would find someone. Jay-Z wanted to be a great rap artist, and nobody signed him. So he had the desire so strong, he created his own record label, which has expanded his life in so, so many ways. Thomas Edison – remember everybody says he failed 1,000 – well, that's he was just getting results. But his desire was so strong, that work was a joyous part of the process.

And I'll take you one from a blast from the past. Remember the movie, *Rocky*? Nobody believed in this guy; nobody! But he'd get up every morning, and he'd run; he'd chase chickens; he'd beat up steak in a freezer... He'd do all this stuff: suck down six raw eggs. You've got to be committed if you want to be sucking down raw eggs, in my opinion! But that's how much he wanted it! And you know what his desire was? To have respect. He didn't necessarily want to win; he wanted to get in that ring and prove that it wasn't a mismatch and to be humiliated. He wanted to get respect. And that desire was so strong it motivated – it closed the gap of where he was and what he wanted. And he put the action to it and, of course, we know how the story goes.

So what is it that you desire? Are you willing to use affirmations – you know, the affirmations and questions – to close that gap and to do the actions that get the results that you want?

What we say to ourselves and others impacts our lives. The questions we ask ourselves and others impacts our lives. Affirmations and questions help build, form and transform our lives. And they're easy, simple practices! The question is: Are you ready to use and utilize the power of affirmations?

God bless you!

OFFERING

Rev. Lori Fleming: And now it's time in our service to give of our gifts and our tithes and our offerings. We're so grateful for you all who have been sending your checks in, and tithing online: all the ways that you support Unity of Phoenix. In this time when we can't physically be together, we can be together online, through cyberspace. And that's a good thing! I imagine all of you out there knowing that soon we'll be together!

And so, for this offering, our offering blessing is: *"Divine Love, through me, blesses and multiplies all that I have, all that I give and all that I receive."* Will you affirm that with me? *"Divine Love, through me, blesses and multiplies all that I have, all that I give and all that I receive."* And so, Mother/Father God, we say thank you for these gifts and these tithes and these offerings. We know they are given in love, and they are received in love; and that they move through this ministry with the energy of Divine Love out into the world as good. And that each giver is blessed: heaped up, pressed down and overflowing, for that is the Law. And so it is. Thank you, God! Amen.

CLOSING

Rev. Lori Fleming: And so, hopefully, my friends, soon we will be physically together! Take care of yourselves; take care of each other; practice random acts of kindness when you are out. Because we're all in this together! Many blessings! Thank you!

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