

THINKING

Week #3 of the 5-Week Series, "Back to School"

Sept. 30, 2020

Rev. Richard Rogers

Rev. Richard Rogers: Hello! I'm Richard Rogers, and I want to welcome you to Unity of Phoenix Spiritual Center - to the Wednesday night service. I am so glad you're here!

You know, I'm doing this service on "Back to School." And I'm hearing so many positive about this series of talks. Because it's really about going back to Unity's fundamental understandings, and today we're going to talk about thinking.

But before we get there, there are a couple of announcements that I want to share with you. This Sunday we are re-opening! October 4, 9 o'clock in the Garden. We're going to have social distancing; we're going to ask you to wear a mask. We're really looking forward to getting back together as a spiritual community. It's really going to be a great time to really honor our spiritual life. And just being with each other again! So that'll be this Sunday. So I want to call your attention to that.

Also, our Circles of Gratitude program begins on October 18. And this is the 40 days before Thanksgiving, where we really have an opportunity to deepen our experience of gratitude. Also, we're going to have Circle Groups; they're going to be meeting through Zoom. You can call the office or go online if you want to be a part of one of those Circle Groups.

And the last thing is: We have many classes that we're offering right now on Zoom. And what's so fun about this is that we can have people from all over the country - literally, all over the world! - join you in a Zoom class. So if you're interested in one of our Zoom classes, go online - all of our classes are there - and join us!

Alright; so that's all the announcements. I want you to know just still yourself, close your eyes if that's comfortable for you, as we go into this time of meditation.

MEDITATION:

Take a deep breath. And I want you to feel the presence of God. There is a power in having a quiet mind. That tonight we're going to talk about thinking. But beyond thinking, there is a level of life where our mind and our thoughts are quiet. Where we are still. And in this time of prayer and meditation, I'm going to invite you just to still your mind to feel the presence of God.

You know, when our mind is racing - when the chatter is going on - we really miss the opportunity just to be still in the silence with God. That when we're anxious or afraid, our mind tends to go from one dramatic thought to the next. And there's a moment where we just need to say to ourselves - to the mind, to the busy-ness of our thoughts - peace; be still. Peace; be still! That beyond our fears, beyond our anxiety, beyond our worries is the pure presence of God, designed to bless us in every situation. There is the pure presence of God - right here, right now - that is at work at every level of your life. Be still, and know God! Be still; quiet your mind, and feel the glory of God within you.

Thank you, God! Thank you, God; thank you, God; thank you, God! For all that is happening in our life - for all that is happening in the world - thank you, God, that your Spirit is at work through each and every one of us: guiding us; leading us; blessing us. That we lean back into your Spirit, and let you be in charge of this moment, this day, this activity.

Take another deep breath. Let your mind be quiet. And let God be in charge. Let God bless you fully. Thank you, God; thank you, God; thank you, God, for this day, for this moment, for every blessings, for

every good thing. For a life of peace and quiet. A life of faith and trust. A life of order and harmony. A life of love and joy.

So in the name and through the power of the Living Christ, we give thanks. And so it is. Amen.

SONG:

Alexandra Ncube: "Brave" (accompanied by Craig Bohmler on the piano)

You can be amazing
You can turn a phrase into a weapon or a drug
You can be the outcast
Or be the backlash of somebody's lack of love
Or you could start speaking up

Nothing's gonna hurt you the way that words do
When they settle 'neath your skin
Kept on the inside with no sunlight
Sometimes a shadow wins
But I wonder what would happen if you

Say what you wanna say
And let the words fall out
Honestly, I wanna see you be brave
With what you want to say
And let the words fall out
Honestly, I wanna see you be brave

Just wanna see you
I just wanna see you
Just wanna see you
I wanna see you be brave

Just wanna see you
I just wanna see you
Just wanna see you
I wanna see you be brave

Everybody's been there
Everybody's been stared down by the enemy
Fallen for the fear
And done some disappearing
Bow down to the mighty
Don't run; stop holding your tongue

Maybe there's a way out of this cage where you live
Maybe one of these days you can let the light in
Show me how big your brave is

Say what you wanna say
And let the words fall out
Honestly, I wanna see you be brave
With what you want to say
And let the words fall out
Honestly, I wanna see you be brave

And since your history of silence
Won't do you any good
Did you think it would?
May your words be anything but empty
Why don't you tell them the truth?

And say what you wanna say
And let the words fall out
Honestly, I wanna see you be brave
With what you want to say
And let the words fall out
Honestly, I wanna see you be brave
Wanna see you be brave
I wanna see you be brave

Yeah, just wanna see you
I just wanna see you
I wanna see you be brave

Just wanna see you
I just wanna see you
Just wanna see you
I wanna see you be brave

[Light applause]

MESSAGE

Rev. Richard Rogers: Alexandra, that was fabulous! I feel brave! I feel ready! I am ready to go! That was ... Thank you! Craig, thank you; that was fabulous! You guys are the best!

Okay! Are you ready for tonight? So we're doing this series called "Back to School." And the idea is to take our Unity fundamental understandings, and kind of going back to school on those ideas or on those concepts that really have made a difference in our life. Because sometimes we get so kind of disconnected from our roots, from our story, from our past that we forget sometimes what got us to where we are. And sometimes we have to go back to the things that have made the biggest difference in our life, and really get grounded on those fundamental things that really transform our life.

And so, tonight, I want to talk about thinking. And we've been using Emilie Cady's book, *Lessons in Truth*. So I want to have a discussion. I know last week I kind of launched into the subject of thinking, but I want to take it deeper and further today.

So I want to talk about thinking. And the first question that I have for you tonight is: Have you ever had a thought - one single thought - that changed your whole life? Like, there are times in our life where we have a thought that is so radical - so wonderful, so big, so transformative - that it literally changes everything. And that really is the power of thought. Right? That we can have a thought that so rocks our boat - so changes us - that we change everything because of the greatness of that thought. And that's what Unity really stands for. Unity is about inspiring us to really transform our thinking, so that we can live fuller, greater lives.

And so we're going to go into this thing. You know, the research shows that we have between 20,000 and 60,000 thoughts every day. The challenge is - or the problem is - is that they tend to be the same thoughts over and over again. That, if we tell ourselves the truth - most of us most of the time are having the same thoughts that we always have. And that is the tendency why we tend to experience the same life over and over again. And the radical idea is to be willing to entertain a thought that you don't usually have, right?

And usually what happens when we entertain a thought that we don't usually have is: We usually beat it to death. Like, there's a thought; it comes into our mind. It maybe is greater or worse, whatever. And we just beat it to death. We never really kind of slow it down and say, "*Wow! What if that was true? What if I could live a life that's that big? Or what if I could experience that is that blessed?*"

Because over and over again, what happens is: The thoughts that we think repetitively are the things that become our belief system. Right? As we think a thought -- twice, three times, a thousand times, a hundred-thousand times -- we actually begin to believe our own thought. And the thing that's crazy about this - and I don't mean literally crazy; I mean interestingly crazy ... The thing that's crazy about this is that, because we think a thought over and over again, we actually believe it, even if it's not true! Like, even if it's not accurate! I think that is so amazing! That, as a group of people, we would have thoughts that may not be true, but that we say them so often - or other people say them to us so often -- that we actually believe those thoughts. And what we see happening in our culture right now -- in our country right now -- is that we have really divergent thoughts that people absolutely believe are true. And these two groups of people are coming together and their beliefs don't match any more! Like, they're hearing things -- they're believing things -- that just literally are not true!

And so, from a spiritual point of view, is that's problematic. Right? It's problematic for our culture; it's problematic for our nation; but it's also problematic for ourselves! It's problematic if you're consistently believing things that aren't true! And you say, "*Well, Richard; if I believe it, it must be true!*" Well, it's true for you! But that doesn't mean it's reality! It doesn't mean that it's accurate! It doesn't mean that it really enhances your life!

Like, if you believe that you're not good enough, right? And if you think that thought over and over and over again: that you're not good enough. You actually believe that you're not good enough. Like, that's problematic! That limits your life! And just because you believe it's so -- just because it's filtering all the information that's coming toward you, and you have case after case after case that actually proves that you're not good enough -- it's really that belief that creates that experience. And that's a problem!

Like, I want you to live your greatest life! I want you to live a life that is so good, so blessed, so full, so rich, so happy, so living! And we actually have to believe those things for us to have those experiences.

You know, there are many examples where Jesus talked about how our beliefs create our reality. In Matthew 9:29 he said, "*Then he touched them in the eye, and said to them, 'According to your faith it is done unto you' and they were healed.*" From Matthew 8:13: "*And Jesus said to the centurion, 'Go; as you believe, so it will be done unto you.' And his servant was healed in that hour.*" From Matthew 9:22: "*Jesus said, 'Take courage, my daughter, for your faith has healed you.' And the woman was cured within that very hour.*"

Over and over again, what I want you to see is that what you believe actually organizes your life. Actually organizes your reality. And so, as we begin to take responsibility for our thoughts, and begin to think new thoughts, begin to make new thoughts repetitive, and entertain new thoughts over and over again, we actually change our reality.

You know, Emilie Cady, in her book *Lessons in Truth* – that has been the textbook for our “Going Back to School” series – talked to us about thinking. And she said this. In paragraph #6 she said: *“There is in reality only one Mind in the universe; yet there is a sense in which we are all individuals, or separate, a sense that we have free will and are not puppets.”*

Okay? So there's one Mind: the mind of God, whatever you want to call that. Capital M: Mind, Spirit, God, Universe. Whatever you want to call it. Divine Mind. Right? There's a sense that there's one Mind, and each one of us is an expression of that one Mind. But because we have free will, we get to think any thought we want! Like, we can either raise our thinking to think God thoughts -- spiritual thoughts, holy thoughts, sacred thoughts -- or we can think thoughts of pain and separation and frustration. We absolutely, because we are not puppets – because we have free will – we get to decide what are the thoughts we're going to think!

And what I want you to see today is that what you're thinking day in and day out matters! It counts! That if you're thinking negative thoughts about yourself, it is creating your reality. If you're thinking negative thoughts about friends or family members, it impacts your relationship! It impacts who you are! It impacts the way you treat them.

And over and over again, what I want you to look at today is: Are you willing to have a thought that is bigger, greater, more powerful than you usually think? Are you willing to entertain some really wonderfully radical, spiritual ideas?

Paragraph 7 – she says: *“Man is made up of Spirit, soul and body. Spirit is the central unchanging ‘I’ of us, the part that since infancy has never changed, and throughout all eternity never will change. That which is in some persons called ‘mortal mind’ is the region of the intellect, where we do conscious thinking and have access to free will. This part of our being is in a constant process of changing. In our outspringing from God into the material world, Spirit is the inner – one with God; our soul is the clothing, as it were, of the Spirit. The body is the external clothing that the soul wear. Yet, in all reality, the composite man is as steam, water and ice. For all are one, only in different degrees of condensation. In thinking of ourselves, we must not separate our Spirit – which is God’s Spirit – from our soul and our body, but rather hold them all as one, if we hold strong and powerfully. Man originally lived consciously in the spiritual part of himself.”*

So what I want you to see today is that you have complete free will over the thoughts that you think. Now, your tendency is going to want to keep thinking thoughts that you've always thought. Because you have trotted down that road. Those thoughts are the first thoughts. Those are the easiest thoughts. Those are the habitual thoughts. You absolutely will want to go to those habitual thoughts.

But what I want to challenge to do today is to think thoughts that are radically higher. Think thoughts that are of greater love; greater abundance; greater spirit; greater possibilities. I want you to challenge yourself today as we focus on thinking: to be responsible for changing the level of thought that you regularly hold. Right?

And one of the things I'm going to invite you to look at is: Just begin to pay attention to what are your habitual thoughts. What are the thoughts that you usually think? And can you imagine taking all your thoughts to the next highest level?

Also from Emilie Cady, Paragraph #12: *“If you are one who seeks and expects to get any realization of knowledge of spiritual things through arguing or reasoning, no matter how scholarly your attainments or how great your worldly wisdom might be, you are a failure in spiritual understanding. You are attempting to utter the impossible – that of crowding the Infinite into a quart measure of your intellectual capacity.”*

So what does she mean? Well, first of all, she's talking about that spiritual things have to be spiritually discerned. I think all of us have had an experience of being guided and directed, knowing what we are called to do, even though we don't know why we're guided in that way, or why we're called to do that. And when we trust that guidance -- when we trust that inner knowing -- we find that our life just works better. That when we trust that inner wisdom within us, even when we don't know how we know that, when we trust it enough to follow it -- when we trust it enough to put it into action -- we find that our life just works better.

So there's really two ways -- paths -- to self-knowledge. The first path is the path of the intellect. You know, and that's really when we want to intellectualize spiritual things. And Cady's point is that we can only do so much of that. That your intellects can only hold so much of the Infinite wisdom and knowledge of God. The other point she makes is the path of discernment. And the path of discernment isn't a path of thinking; it's really a path of knowing. And trusting that you know. Right? That beyond your thinking is this path of discernment. And that spiritual people are willing to trust their inner knowing even more than they trust their thoughts about something *"I'm not sure why I did that; I just knew that that was the right thing for me. I'm not sure why I made that choice; I just knew that that was the right choice for me."* And that, over and over again, as you trust that spiritual discernment, you find that your life moves at higher and higher ways.

Paragraph #37: *"If you keep your thoughts turned toward the external of yourself or others, you will see only the things that are not real: the temporal. You will see all those things pass away. All the faults, failures or lacks in people or circumstances will seem very real to you, and you will be unhappy and sick."*

See, the reality is, right now, I want you to see the spiritual truth of the people around you. I want you to begin to speak to that. I want you to begin to think that. I want you to begin to see the God in everyone: especially NOW! As a nation -- when we are so divided -- I want you to begin to see the spiritual truth.

Like, there is so much conflict in our nation right now. Right? And we have taken sides. *"This is the right side. And this is the good side. And this is the bad side. And these people are awful; they're terrible!"* And what I want us to see is that, as we become more and more of a divided nation, we actually live a harder, more difficult experience. That we have to be willing to build bridges. We have to be willing to see each other in a new light. We have to be willing to call out the highest level of good in each other.

The final paragraph in this chapter was Paragraph #38. And it says this: *"If you turn your thoughts away from the external toward the spiritual, and let them dwell on the good in yourself and in others, all the apparent evil will first drop out of your thoughts and then out of your life. Paul understood this when he wrote to the Philippians: 'My brother, whatever things are true, whatever things are honorable, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are good report, if there be any virtue -- if there be any praise -- I want to think of these things.'"*

I want you to really begin to make a list of all the times you wanted to judge somebody. I want you to find at least three things that are good about them. I want you to really look for the good in one another. And I want you to begin to use your thought process as an indicator of good and only good. Not only for you, but for all of us!

See, if every thought becomes a belief -- if every repetitive thought becomes a belief -- what I want you to begin to imagine for a moment is a thought bubble, or a thought ball. And I want you to imagine that every thought that you regularly think is like this huge ball of thought. Right? Can you see it? This huge ball of thought.

Now, your life is being actually generated through this huge ball of thought. And what I'm going to ask you do tonight -- what I -- this is your homework! I want you to think of one idea that is bigger than that

idea. That is bigger -- that is outside -- your normal level of thinking. I want you to think of an idea that's over here; or I want you to think of an idea that would be way over here. Right? I want you to think of an idea that is so big that it's outside your normal thinking.

Now, why would you want to do that? Well, one of the things that I know that is true -- that is just absolutely everywhere right now -- is the idea that successful people are reading information every day that is outside their normal way of thinking. Now, I think that's very important, right? That successful people, every day, are reading material that is causing them to think in a new way. Why? Because, if this is your thought bubble -- if this is where your thinking lives -- then if we challenge ourselves every day to think outside that bubble, then that bubble is always in the state of expanding. And as that bubble expands, our entire life expands!

Now, what tends to happen is that this thought bubble has a gravitational pull, if you will. So when you think of a thought that's outside that bubble, there's a gravitational pull that tries to pull that thought back into your thought bubble. And what usually happens is: The more you think of a thought outside that thought bubble, what you begin to experience is a level of self-doubt. Like, when we think a thought about our life that's greater than the life that we know, for most of us, the next very thought is a thought of self-doubt. And the reason we think that is because we're now thinking and operating from outside what we're used to. And so this gravitational pull tries to pull us back into our dominant thoughts.

And what I want you to be doing every day is challenging yourself every day to think a greater thought that is a unique thought: that is bigger, that is greater, that is more godly, that is more spiritual, more abundant, more loving. I want you to be reading information. I want you to be thinking thoughts every day that are constantly expanding your thought process. Because if we're not expanding our thought process -- if we're not thinking new thoughts every day -- we're actually contracting into the old thoughts that we habitually think. We're actually becoming more and more stuck and grounded in the rutted thinking of our past. And as a world right now, we can't afford to be stuck in the thinking of our past.

We have to be entertaining new ideas. We have to be entertaining new thoughts. We need to be reading about people that we haven't read about; we need to be thinking about things that we've never thought about. We need to be taking on information that we've never heard before. We need to be in the process of evolution, not in contracting back into the old. And this is critical right now!

Your thinking actually matters! What you're thinking on a daily basis actually matters! It matters not only for you and your family, but it matters for the world. That we can't allow our mind to become soft and limited in our thinking. We have to be pushing beyond our normal thought to really live in an expanded version of yourself.

So your homework today: are you ready? Your homework today is: I want you to think one radical thought. One thought that is not usual and customary. One thought that challenges the understanding of your present belief system. One thought that is so big, so wonderful, so abundant, so loving that it challenges you to live a bigger life.

"Richard, I don't want to live a bigger life." Well, what happens is that we're at choice point now. We're either going to expand, or we're going to contract into ourselves. This is true! So I'm going to challenge you: one radical thought a day. Forget the apple. I want you to have one radical thought every day.

Will you take that into prayer with me?

So we open our mind, our heart, our soul to the activity of God that is right here, right now. That we're willing to entertain one new thought -- one radical thought, one thought that is bigger and greater than

we could ever imagine before. Thank you, God, for life-changing thoughts. For transformative thoughts. For thoughts that make a difference in our life. For thoughts that cause us to grow and expand and to be more godly. Thank you, God; thank you, God; thank you, God! And so it is. Amen.²²

COLLECTION

This is a time of giving of our gifts and tithes. And even if you're giving online – or mailing a check to the church – what I invite you to do is just hold hand. And our offering blessing is: *"Divine love, through me, blesses and multiplies all that I give and all that I receive."* Together: *"Divine love, through me, blesses and multiplies all that I give and all that I receive."* Together; let's say it one more time: *"Divine love, through me, blesses and multiplies all that I give and all that I receive."*

CLOSING

God bless you, friend! I absolutely see your life changing from the inside out. I see you entertaining new ideas, reading new ideas, studying new ideas that cause you to think in greater and new ways that transform your life! That we have the choice today. And the choice is basically: Am I going to live in the thoughts of yesterday? Or am I going to open my mind to possibilities that I've never considered before? God bless you, friend!

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