

MINDSETS AND RELATIONSHIPS

Final Week of the 2-Week Series, "The Psychology of Success"

April 18, 2021

Rev. Richard Maraj

Rev. Richard Maraj: Good morning, everyone, and welcome to Unity of Phoenix Spiritual Center! I'm Richard Maraj, senior minister; so glad that you are joining us here today. We are thrilled that we'll be beginning indoor services right here in the Sanctuary LIVE Sunday, June the 6th at both 9 and 11 a.m. Youth & Family Ministry will begin that same day at the 11 a.m. service.

I'm excited to begin a new series next week called, "Stop Fixing Yourself!" I think the title kind of says it all, but it's even richer and deeper than you can imagine. So we'll look forward to that.

Right now, we are going to enter a time of prayer and meditation. And to prepare us for that experience, we will now listen to the choir as they sing "Surely the Presence."

Unity of Phoenix Choir sings "Surely the Presence"

Surely the presence of the Lord is in this place
I can see God's mighty power and God's grace
I can feel the brush of angels' wings
I see glory on each face
Surely the presence of the Lord is in this place

MEDITATION

Rev. Lori Fleming: I invite you to join me in a time of prayer and meditation as we take a few moments to take some time away. As we gently close our outer eyes and take in a deep, cleansing breath. Release it slowly. Begin to slow our breathing; begin to slow our busy minds as we take in another mindful breath. And as we release it, we let go of anything that's caused any busyness today ... just gently let it go as we move our awareness within. Breathing in and breathing out. Focusing our awareness into the very depths of our souls to that place where we are one: one with the Divine. One with the All of the cosmos in that quiet, still place at the center of our being, into the depths of our souls.

We recognize that we live in a prosperous, abundant universe. That God is willing to give us the kingdom of heaven, just for the asking. And that each and every thought sets up the vibration that begins to create that thought in the manifest world. As within, so without. And so we recognize that whatever we desire can be ours: more love in our lives; deeper relationships with those people that we care about; better finances; a greater job that we can be a contribution to. These are all ours for the asking. Because God loves to much that God is willing to give us whatever we ask for. And we know that there is enough for all: enough to spare, and enough to share.

As we live in this abundant universe, and we know that sharing is an important part of all the prosperity that we have, we share of our gifts and our talents: a kind word; a smile; a pat on the back. These are greater ways to show the abundance of the universe that God has given us.

And so we take just a few moments to move more deeply into the silence, as we recognize the prosperous universe that we live in.

SILENCE

And so we come in gratitude, sweet Spirit, for this time together. For this time away from our mundane, daily lives into the world of Spirit, where we are lifted up. Where we are revitalized. Where our cells are illumined. We say thank you, God, for all of our blessings: each and every one of them. Thank you for creating this prosperous world that we live in. Thank you for creating us. Thank you, God; thank you, God; thank you, God! And it is so. Amen.

MESSAGE

Rev. Richard Maraj: Thank you, Rev. Lori; that was a beautiful and wonderful meditation. Really appreciate it!

So, what is the secret to success? Is it having a clear, bold vision and goals? Is it having desire and determination? Is it having a well-thought-out plan with daily action steps? Well, you could say “Yes” to those, but research shows that the single greatest influencer in our level of success – the single greatest factor that helps or prevents us from fulfilling our potential – is our mindset.

Our mindset is our collective belief of what we think about ourselves, and how we see the world and others, and how it all works. And our mindset truly affects the trajectory of our motivation, of our effectiveness and our level of success.

You see, the mind is always evaluating and interpreting, moderating and dealing with all kinds of information we receive every day, and every day of our lives. And our mindset really is the frame – it is the lens – through which we see, we interpret, we evaluate. It’s really what shapes and colors all of our feelings and our experiences; what influences our actions and reactions in literally every area of our lives. Our mindset truly is the psychology of success.

So today we complete our two-week series called “The Psychology of Success.” And what it shows us is that there are two dominant mindsets that most people have: one or the other, or a range of them. And that is the fixed mindset and the growth mindset. Fixed mindset really believes that our talents and our abilities, our personalities and our qualities, are “fixed”: that they are set. That they are carved in stone, and they really can’t change. In the same way, people think that our IQ is our inborn intelligence – that it is permanent and unchangeable. Fixed mindset believes that all aspects of us are kind of fixed and permanent, and that’s just how we are.

Fixed mindset gives birth to a desire to always prove ourselves: to show that we smart; to show that we are successful. Looking smart and impressing people by affirming the inherent abilities and intelligence in us is absolutely a key factor. And there is a passion to hide our weaknesses, because we never want to look bad. We don’t want to look stupid; we don’t want to look dumb. We don’t want to look like failures. So we are always trying to do our best and avoid anything that makes us look bad ... anything that we don’t do well. And we don’t risk; we don’t take chances, because we want to play safe.

In the fixed mindset, it’s so rigid that we only think it is failure of success. Win or lose. You’re smart or you’re dumb. You’re accepted or you are rejected. And, really, the worst part of this fixed mindset – of its rigidity – is that it always plays out in being hard judges of ourselves for not measuring up to as great as we think we should be. We have this idea that, if we are really talented and good, everything should come easy, and that we shouldn’t have to work hard. And hard work is a sign that we just don’t “have it,” and may never get it.

Now the growth mindset is the exact opposite. It believes that we can change. We can improve. We can grow and develop. That we cultivate our talents and become better and better and better. Through effort and work and time and a passion for learning, and a desire to love challenging ourselves – of asking questions, taking risks, stretching and expanding – that is the heart of the growth mindset. A belief that we can be more, and there is more that we can become, experience, achieve and create. Failure is seen as an opportunity for growth, not a dead end, and not an identifier of who we are.

You know, Jesus said that he came that we may have life and have it more abundantly. The Bible also says that God has a plan for us to prosper, and that – with God – all things are possible: that we can ask and receive, and it really is the Father’s good pleasure to give us the kingdom.

And so, what is the key factor that opens the door to all this abundance, prosperity and the keys to the kingdom? It is – in one word – our mindset! That’s why Paul said, “*Let the same mind that was in Jesus Christ be in you.*” That same mindset that Jesus saw himself, and lived through, was a mindset of love. A

mindset of peace. A mindset of gratitude. A mindset of forgiveness. A mindset of compassion and love and abundance and unlimited possibilities.

So my question for you is: what is your dominant mindset? How do you see yourself? What do you believe about yourself? How do you see others? And how do you see life as working? It is closer to a more fixed mindset? Or is it closer to a more growth mindset?

Today we are going to talk about mindsets as it relates to relationships. Now, life really is about love, and love is about relationships. And relationships are not easy! I found a few little quotes about relationships, and how hard they are. And here we go!

Marriage is when a man and a woman become one. The trouble starts when they try to decide which one. [Chuckles]

Here's advice for grooms. When you have a discussion with your future wife, always get the last two words in: "Yes, dear."

What is the penalty for bigamy? Too mothers in law!

And here's the big finish! A man approaches this really beautiful woman in this little local supermarket. And he says to her, "I've lost my wife in the supermarket somewhere; can you talk to me for a few minutes?" And the woman says, "Why?" And the guy says, "Because every time I talk to a beautiful woman, my wife appears out of nowhere?" [Laughs]

So let's look at mindset as it relates to relationships.

The fixed mindset – as it relates to relationships ... and we'll kind of focus on romantic relationships for now – believes that there is a right and perfect person for us. There is our ideal partner – our soul mate – that, when we meet, we are completed. "You complete me." It believes that there is instant success; it is a perfect fit, and there is perpetual compatibility that affirms all of the good of each other. It is meeting the one that we could ride into the sunset and live happily after with.

And this mindset really expects the good to just come naturally without effort. That, when you are with the perfect person, everything should just be easy and flow. If it is hard work, then it is not right, and it is not a good fit. Because, if you've got the right one you love, shouldn't it just be easy? You shouldn't have to work at it!

And so, when disagreements and conflict come, it is a threat to that mindset. Because there is this idea that, if you love me, you will know what I want. If you love me, you will already know. And we think we should read each other's minds and finish each other's sentences. That it should be that blissful and perfect.

So the fixed mindset has four very rigid beliefs about romantic relationship:

- There is the perfect and right one for us;
- We should always agree on everything;
- It should be easy, without any effort; and
- We should be able to read each other's minds.

And so, when things don't go well, what is turned to is blame: either blaming the other person, or blaming ourselves. (We prefer the other person!) And we begin to think that they have flaws – something's wrong with them – and we begin to get disgusted at them, dissatisfied, and even have contempt for them. And suddenly, this spouse – this partner, this ideal person – turns into the enemy. And since the mindset believes that things can't be fixed or improved, they tend to develop resentment, misery and stay in a place of being stuck in an unhappy relationship. That's fixed mindset in a relationship in a very extreme way.

And then the growth relationship mindset believes that a couple can be in love and bring out the very best in each other. Support each other's strengths, and help each other in their weaknesses. To develop,

to be supportive, to be nurturing, to be positive for them to become better individuals, as well as a better couple. That, wherever they are – whatever is going on – we can always develop a healthier, more honest, caring, nurturing relationship.

And like everything in life where we achieve something great, there are challenges and struggles. Growth mindset people believe that all relationships have struggles and challenges and difficulties. The difference is: there isn't blaming and shaming of each other; there's just an awareness that this is a good relationship, and it can get better if we communicate, stick together, and work on these different areas.

And the foundation of it isn't blame; but it's actually trust! Trusting that person loves us. Trust that we love them. And trust that – together – we can actually make our relationship better. Because there's sometimes we don't trust that we're loved.

Lou Epstein, in the book, *Trusting You are Loved*, shares a wonderful story about – a wonderful illustration – of when he went away to a speaking engagement. And his wife usually packed his bag and packed his pillow for him. And on this one trip, he went to unpack his bag and didn't see the pillow. And immediately he thought, *"Oh, my God! How could she do this?!? She probably did this on purpose! She doesn't love me; I should just leave her!"* And he starts going into all this horrible scenario. And then he actually takes a breath and realizes that she does love him. Just 'cause she forgot a pillow once doesn't mean you stop trusting or believing that you are loved.

And so, in the growth mindset, we get to actually coach ourselves, and say: *"Is this really true?"* You know, we get to coach ourselves and say, *"What is the most loving thing I can think of in this moment?"* And so I love that about the growth mindset! Because it's wherever we are – and things aren't always perfect – but there's a belief that we can improve them. We can improve ourselves. We can open our hearts and love in a fuller way. We can listen and be more caring and thoughtful and attentive.

I mean, relationships aren't easy at all! But there's 100% belief that there can be growing and learning and getting better at communication, and healing our issues, engaging in forgiveness, and releasing to become even closer and more loving with one another.

So I want you to think of a relationship in your life that you're struggling with. And are you closer to a fixed mindset: using blame and thinking it should just be easy and something must be wrong? Or the growth mindset, where you believe this can get better. That I trust that I am loved, and I know – with communication and honesty – we can make this even better?

Mindsets do affect all of our relationships, not just the romantic ones. I want to share a little about our mindset as it relates to how we raise our children. And how we use praise in raising our children. You know, parents seem to think – and we all kind of do it – is that we'll give our children permanent confidence and belief in themselves if we just keep saying positive things and affirming their intelligence and their talent. But you know what studies show? That doesn't work! In fact, always lavishing kids with compliments on their talents and their intelligence actually harms their motivation and their performance and their belief in themselves.

I was surprised to hear that, but here's some of the information that supports it. Sometimes the messages we give our kids – we're thinking they're success messages, but they're kind of affirming the possibility of failure. Listen to some of these comments. *"You learn so quickly; you are just so smart!"* *"Look at that drawing; Martha, he's going to be the next Picasso, isn't he?"* *"You're so brilliant; you got an A without even studying!"*

Now those things sound very positive. But here's what kids hear: *"If I don't learn something quickly, then I'm not smart."* *"I shouldn't draw anything hard, or they'll see that I am no Picasso."* *"I better quit studying so much; otherwise, they won't think I'm brilliant ... naturally brilliant."*

And so, in this mindset, sometimes kids start to believe that success means you're smart, and that failure means that you're dumb. And so the best approach – according to research – with kids is to

affirm and praise their efforts and not their intelligence. Praising intelligence does work, but it only works for a brief while. But in the long run, it actually doesn't help; it actually hurts. Praising their effort – how much work, praising how much they've improved, that they're trying really hard, that they're doing their best, that they're focused and disciplined in their homework practices – really helps children stay more positive, and doesn't make them slaves to praise or approval or validation. Because that constant need for that leads to perfectionism and the stress of feeling like, *"I always need to measure up."*

Success is not always about winning, and it is not always about being the very best. But it's about our best. Because what you end up having is kids who are successful on the outside, but inside they're not feeling good. They feel like a little hamster in a wheel: always trying to prove how good – how smart, how successful – they really are.

And so we actually bring up more whole and happy children when we use a growth mindset. And one of the things to do is to encourage kids to love challenges: see them as a really good thing. To know that mistakes are a part of the learning process that help us get better and better. And it's okay to make mistakes – It's okay to fail – because they teach us. And help them enjoy the process ... enjoy the journey ... enjoy the experience. It's okay to look at things a different way and, if it doesn't work, try a different way. And what happens is: kids are healthier. They're happier. And they tend to actually succeed and feel a sense of inner joy, and feel good about themselves.

So let's look at a few things we can do to change and improve our mindset, moving it from fixed to growth.

The first one is to tell yourself a new story. To tell yourself a new story is a reflection of an intention and a desire to learn, to grow, to improve and to get better and have a happier life. And the way we tell ourselves a better story is by understanding the story we're already telling ourselves. To look at areas of our lives where the fixed mindset is limiting us and keeping us stuck or trapped in a concept of blame or, *"I'm just not good enough."*

So a question for all of us to ask is: in what way is the fixed mindset affecting your life? Your relationship? Your work? And how you feel about yourself? And whether it's journaling, or doing some self-reflection, it's important to look at the areas where we're avoiding or we're giving up. Or where we think, *"It should be way easier than this!"* And we don't like working hard. Or we don't believe we can improve or get any better than how life is right now.

And so, what would you like to improve on in your life? What area would you like to succeed in? And just even beginning to hold and open your mind. Even one area you'd like to improve is an important thing. And then, begin to change some of the words we use habitually. Like, instead of saying, *"I can't do it,"* or, *"I'm not good at it,"* we can say, *"I can do it, and I am good at it ... or I will get better at it!"*

Or, *"I don't have what it takes to learn" to the, "I can learn! And I can improve!"*

"I probably shouldn't try that; I should just stick to what I know" could be changed to, "I love trying new things! I love exploring new ideas!"

Or change, *"That's not possible" to, "Anything is possible if I'm willing to give it a try!"*

Or change, *"I give up; this is too hard. I'm a failure," to, "I love a challenge! I learn from my mistakes. I believe in myself, and it's okay to fail, because I can even get better when I fail!"* Or, *"I don't need to prove myself; I am worthy, I am lovable, and I am deserving."*

And probably the growth mindset affirmation that puts it all together is, of course: *"Each and every day, in each and every way, my life is getting better and better and better!"*

To me, the growth mindset really looks at life as an expansive, unlimited arena of possibility. That, whatever is going on – relationship or work – that, *“I really can get better! That things can unfold! I can learn and cultivate an even better and more joyful life.”*

So cultivating ideas of learning and improving in all areas is important, because it gives us more hope, more optimism, more positive energy and creativity. We begin to see the possibilities, the solution. And we open ourselves for greater inspiration.

So what is the new story you want to start telling yourself in that one area of your life to try to transform it into a growth mindset?

The second thing to improve is to develop a healthy, loving relationship. So think about a relationship in your life right now, and what can you learn and develop better in that relationship that will really help you? Is it to develop more patience in your relationship? Or more kindness? Or more compassion? Or more care? Or more support? Or more listening? Or more generosity? Whatever the level of your relationship is at any time, it is always possible to grow it, to expand it, to learn, and to make it better.

And it's a matter of getting to that place: do you trust that you're loved? Are you willing to share with your partner what you can do, and what you'd like them to do to make whatever area better? And are you willing to put that effort into it?

And it's really a matter of starting with one thing. You don't have to overhaul everything! Start with just one thing, and it'll make a difference. Are you willing to come up with a relationship vision? And then ask each other what you can do to make it more fun or fulfilling? Or honest or authentic or safe or spontaneous or passionate? Whatever it is you want is absolutely possible with this mindset to improve.

So what's one thing you want to do to create a healthier and more loving, nurturing relationship?

And then the third thing to do is sometimes you need some professional help. Sometimes we're stuck in our mindset so deeply – and we have blinders on – that we can't see. Seeing a therapist – who can reflect back to us some of the beliefs and mindsets and areas that we're stuck in to heal and release and transform them to open up to new possibilities – is a hugely valuable thing for us to do.

And the final thing to help our mindset is to get some spiritual help. You know, a fixed mindset or a growth mindset – either way – says that our mind is a powerful tool. And do you know the greatest thing we can do to help our minds? *[Pauses]* Is learn how to quiet our mind.

Sometimes we think we need to think with our mind and do all kinds of things. The most powerful thing you can do – because when you quiet your mind, you can immerse your mind in the mind of God. Let the same mind that was in Christ Jesus be in you! And you know what happens when you immerse your mind in the mind of God? When you quiet your mind? All the things of the lesser fall away, and all the things of the greater come forth. Frustration falls away and faith comes forth. Turmoil falls away and peace comes forth. Fear falls away and love bubbles up. Our ego falls away and our most authentic self bubbles up.

The more we immerse our mind in the mind of God, the more the things of God will penetrate and fill and radiate beyond our mind. That's why it says, *“Seek ye first His kingdom”* – and the kingdom of God is within. Seek ye first God's kingdom by immersing our mind in the mind of God, and then all the other things begin to unfold. All the other things begin to come forth and radiate themselves in us, and in and through our lives.

Our mind is a powerful thing, and it really does have the greatest influence on our level of peace, success and happiness. There's this story about this British shoe company, and they sent a couple of the sales people and reps to a country in Africa, because they wanted to expand their market. And the first guy said, *“There's no market here; there's no potential, because no one wears shoes!”* And then the second guy said, *“There is a great market here; there's incredible potential, because no one wears shoes ... yet.”*

The fixed mindset is really a mindset that limits change, growth and transformation. And the growth mindset is the starting point of change! It is the starting point of progress and success.

So my question for you is: when you look out at your life, what do you see? What do you see about you? What do you see about others? What do you see about your future, and how life works? Because the truth is: if you want a happier relationship – if you want more prosperity in your life – the mindset is the key! Your mindset is the place to start, because your mindset truly is the new psychology of success.

God bless you all!

SOLO

Guest artist Kristen Drathman sings “Beautiful”

You've got to get up every morning with a smile on your face
And show the world all the love in your heart
Then people gonna treat you better
You're gonna find, yes, you will
That you're beautiful as you feel

Waiting at the station with a workday wind a-blowing
I've got nothing to do but watch the passers-by
Mirrored in their faces I see frustration growing
And they, they don't see it showing; then why do I?

You've got to get up every morning with a smile on your face
And show the world all the love in your heart
Then people gonna treat you better
You're gonna find, yes, you will
That you're beautiful as you feel

I have often asked myself the reason for this madness
In a world where tears are just a lullaby
If there's any answer, maybe love can end this madness
Maybe not, oh, but we can only try

Oh, you've got to get up every morning with a smile on your face
And show the world all of the love in your heart
Then people gonna treat you better
You're gonna find, yes, you will
That you're beautiful, that you're beautiful, that you're beautiful as you feel

OFFERING

Rev. Lori Fleming: It's that time in our service to give of our gifts and our tithes and our offerings. Our offering blessing is: *“Divine love, through me, blesses and multiplies all that I have, all that I give, and all that I receive.”*

And so we say thank you, Mother/Father God, for these gifts, and these tithes and these offerings. We know they are given in love, 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: Well, we're so grateful you could be with us during this time of prayer and meditation and music. Will you join me as we affirm our Prayer for Protection?

The light of God surrounds us;
The love of God enfolds us;
The power of God protects us;
The presence of God watches over us.
Wherever we are, God is. And all is well!

And now we'll close out our service as we listen to the choir singing the Peace Song. Have a blessed week!

Choir sings Peace Song:

Let there be peace on earth
And let it begin with me!
Let there be peace on earth
The peace that was meant to be!

With God as Creator
Family all are we!
Let us walk with each other
In perfect harmony!

Let peace begin with me;
Let this be the moment now!
With every breath I take
Let this be my joyous vow:
To take each moment and live each moment
In peace eternally!

Let there be peace on earth
And let it begin with me!

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