

THRIVE-Part 1

Week #1 of a 2-Week Series

August 22, 2021

Rev. Richard Rogers

Rev. Richard Rogers: First I want to say thank you for all of you that have been holding me in prayer the last couple of weeks. Two weeks ago, I was diagnosed with Covid, even though I'd had my shots and everything. And there was just so much love and support. And I just want to thank you all for all that love and support. Yes, my wife is still negative; no symptoms. And so we just ... I was locked in a closet for 10 days. *[Congregation laughs]* Pretty close to the truth! *[Rev. Rogers and congregation laugh]* But I'm out and about! And I'm no longer contagious. *[Congregation applauds]* That's what the doctors said, and they tested me. So I've got evidence.

Alright! So my question for you today ... are you ready? My question for you today: Is it okay for you to thrive? We've got four hearty "Yes's." *[Congregation laughs]* So is it okay for you to thrive, even if the people around you don't appear to be thriving? *[Congregation: "Yes!"]* Is it okay for you to thrive, even if somebody gives you heat about thriving? *[Congregation: "Yes!"]* Is it okay for you to thrive, even if your friends and family are kind of in the "muck" of life, and they want to pull you into the muck of life? *[Congregation: "Yes!"]* So is it okay for you to thrive, no matter what's going on in the world around you? *[Congregation: "Yes!"]* Is it okay to thrive, even when your mind says you should just try to survive? *[Congregation: "Yes!"]*

Today I want to talk about you. And I want to talk about your ability to thrive, no matter what's going on in the world around you. Because you have within you the full presence and power of God.

And one of my favorite lines is when Jesus said, *"If I be lifted up, I draw all people unto me."* And it's this idea that, the more that you thrive – the more you live your best life – the more you draw ... you can't help but draw people to you that are on fire with life, as well. That we are here today to live, not just to survive. And with all that's going on in the world today, sometimes we have to remind ourselves that I WILL THRIVE.

Will you say that with me? *[With congregation]: "I will thrive."* One more time! *[With congregation: "I will thrive."*

Right? No matter what's going on in the world! No matter what the situations may be with friends or family! No matter what's going on in the community around you that we have a God-given right to thrive! And sometimes when we think, *"Well, I shouldn't have that much"* or *"My life shouldn't be that good,"* or *"What about this situation or that person or that need or that problem? How can I justify thriving in a world that doesn't look like it's thriving right now?"* And my suggestion to you today is that the way we move the world forward is when we all thrive. And that any time any one of us thrives, it inspires everyone around you to take their game up another notch.

And I want you to have that mindset: that you are here to thrive. That you are committed to thriving in your life: at every level of your life.

You know, research shows that one of the greatest indicators of child success in school is to have one significant adult in their life who believes in them. That children have one significant adult that believes in their ability to thrive actually encourages that child to thrive. They accept that belief that that prominent adult in their life, and they actually thrive because of that belief.

And what I want for each and every one of us in this room is to have that person in our life. I want you to have that person in your life that believes in you: that believes that you are called to thrive. And no matter what you're going through right now, that you will thrive. And not only do I want you to have that person, but I want you to be that person. I want you to be that person for the people around you. That, no matter what they're going through – no matter what they're walking through; no matter what

life brings them today – that you can look them straight in the eye and say, “*I believe that you will thrive through this situation.*”

Because, for all of us, there are those times of self-doubt, where we question our ability to thrive. Where we get concerned that the situation or the need or the problem looks so big, so scary, that we just wonder: Can we really thrive in this situation? And I want you to hear that still, small voice within you that says, “*I will thrive.*”

Will you say it with me again? [*With congregation: “I will thrive.”*] I will thrive!

How many of you had – when you were in elementary school – had the lesson about planting a seed and watching a seed grow? Did everybody have that lesson? I remember when I was in elementary school they gave us little milk cartons that had been opened up, and they gave us a little bit of soil, and I think it was a lima bean that we planted in the soil. And our project for that week – or whatever it was – was to see if we could actually allow that lima bean to grow.

And we learned all about what the elements were that nature required to grow. And do you remember what the four elements are? Anybody? We’ve got fingers out over here! How many want to vote for sun, light, warmth? Was one of the key elements, right? Then soil. And then water. [*Congregant: “Air!”*] Right! You passed; you’re probably an elementary school teacher! Right? [*Congregation laughs*] Those four elements, right? And we knew that if any one of those four elements was missing, that that plant was not going to thrive. You know, because some of them we put them in the closet, and they just didn’t do so good. The ones that didn’t get enough water: they died. That we needed all four of those basic elements if those plants were going to thrive.

And what I want you to see today is that, as a human being, there are four aspects of you that – if you’re going to thrive – all four aspects of you need to be fully functional. And that is: spiritual, physical, mental and emotional. And all four of those aspects of you need to be fully functional if you’re going to live your best life. If you’re going to thrive.

And so the question that I have for you today is: If you look at those four elements, on a scale of 1 to 10, how are you doing? Like, if low is 0 and 10 is high, emotionally where are you on the chart? How is your emotional life? Are you feeling a level of peace and confidence? Is there a level of love and joy in your life? Emotionally: where are you?

Mentally, on a scale of 1 to 10: where are you? Like, is your mind moving you in a vision for your life? Are you able to entertain good thoughts? Or are you constantly in self-doubt? Is the fear winning day-in and day-out? Like, from a scale of 1 to 10, mentally: where are you?

Physically, on a scale of 1 to 10: where are you? And maybe most importantly, spiritually: where are you? Do you feel the presence of God in your life? Do you feel connected? Do you feel the power of God moving in and through you? So, on a scale of 1 to 10, where are you mentally? Emotionally? Mentally? Physically? Did I get spiritually? I think I said five, so I apparently repeated one of them! Right? So all four of those elements: Are they part of who you are?

And the other aspect that I believe that we need to call to our attention is redefining our definition of success. You know, many of us are playing off of the definition of success that’s no longer relevant to who we are and where we are in our life. You know, if you look back years ago – five years ago, 10 years ago – I bet your definition of success no longer applies. The world has changed so much in the last 18 months that, if we don’t redefine our definition of success, we’re playing off yesterday’s page book. And it may not apply to who you are today and what you want your life to look like.

When I was college, there were three aspects where I wanted to succeed. The first one was grades. I felt like: If I had good grades, I could get a good job. And believe it or not [*laughs*], I worked on good grades. The second aspect was: I was on the crew team. Eight guys in a boat: stroke, stroke, stroke. Right? And that was part of my definition of success: is I want to be in the first boat. And I wanted the first boat to

do well. We competed nationally, and I wanted us to do well. And the third aspect of success for me *[laughs]* was my dating life. *[Congregation laughs]* And if I had one, I was successful! *[Congregation laughs]* If I didn't have one *[laughs]*, I wasn't so successful! Right?

And those three aspects would really drive me. But that was when I was in my early 20s! Right? That's not the man I am today! In fact, all three of those things aren't even on the list anymore! Now my definition of success is about well-being: about being the best version of me. It's about really living my best life. About expressing all that I still want to give, both personally and professionally.

So if you had to write your new definition of success, what would it entail now? What are the things that you actually need to take off the list that may have been so important in years gone by that aren't even on the list anymore? And what needs to be on the list now because it ... to fully reflect the individual that you are today? The fullness of who you are?

So I want you to write a new definition of success. Not one that's based on years gone by, or one that you feel like you can never meet or never obtain. I want you to have the definition of success now that really allows you to see yourself thriving and successful today. To really be the man or woman you came to be.

See, to fully bring you success, I believe that there are four aspects that I want to share with you today.

And the first one is, to truly thrive, I believe that the nature of our soul is twofold. That the soul either does one of two things: it is either expanding or it's contracting. And that's the soul ever does; it's either expanding to hold more and more good; more and more God; more and more peace; more and more love. The soul is ever-expanding; it has this infinite elasticity that allows us to hold all the good that God is. But the soul also has this capacity to contract. And we think, at times, that fear or conflict or anger: the soul then contracts. And when we're living from a contracted place, we never really ... we can't thrive. We can't live our best life.

And so one of the things I'm going to invite you to look at today is: Literally, in every situation – in every moment and every interaction – is your soul expanding because of that interaction? Or is it contracting?

How many of you have somebody that you talk to on a regular basis, and you know that, as soon as you talk to them, you're going to come out of that experience in a contracted place? Right? Does everybody have somebody like that? And you might talk to them over and over again! But every time you talk to them, you come out of that experience feeling smaller or contracted and less than. And then there are people that you talk to on a regular basis, and when you hang up the phone you just go, "Aw, man; wasn't that great?!" *[Congregation laughs]* Right? You just feel bigger! You feel brighter! You feel happier; you're more excited about life.

And the same thing for everything! Every thought. Every word that we speak. Everything that we put into our body. In every experience, is this an expanding activity or a contracting activity? Is it taking us and moving us forward, or is it making us feel smaller?

Like, with everything you eat. Like, is it expanding you? How many of you know that you have a certain level of food that you love that eat, and every time you eat it you feel "less than"? *[Congregation laughs]* Anybody? Anybody else ever have Bosa donuts? Right? And I know that there are people that can have one little donut hole; I don't really know those people! *[Congregation laughs]* Right? If one apple fritter is good, a dozen is better, right? But then you eat all that sugar, and how do you feel? Do you feel expanded or contracted? No! We feel contracted! We want to just roll over and go back to bed! Right? So we don't feel expanded by that activity.

And with every thought, every feeling, every action ... You know, sometimes people are doing jobs, and every time they go to work, they come away from that experience feeling contracted. Then it's time for us to make a change. I'm going to cough; will you turn me off. *[Coughs]* Excuse me. You didn't turn me off! I could hear it!

Alright! So I want you to really look. The first one is: **I want you to look at your ability to expand or contract.** And if we're going to thrive, we have to be willing to expand.

Second: **I want you to really be accessing the deeper wisdom of God.** I believe that every moment of every day that the Spirit of God has a message for each and every one of us that is guiding us and directing us. And I think sometimes we get so busy doing all the busy things we do in life that we're not actually accessing the deeper level of wisdom.

That's why prayer and meditation is so important. That, through prayer and meditation, we actually quiet our rational mind so that we can tap into the infinite Mind of God. And, through quieting our mind, we actually get to be led and guided, and doors open to us that we can't even imagine. So, through prayer and meditation, we quiet our mind and we actually access the Mind of God.

One of the things I began doing recently is every day putting a blank sheet of paper in front of me. And I imagine myself writing myself a note as if I was writing from the point of view of God. And what would God want to say to me today? And in the beginning, it just felt stupid. *[Congregation laughs]* You know, I've got this blank sheet of paper here, and I'm going to just write. And I'm going to just open up. But what began to happen quickly is: The messages that I began to receive – even though I'm writing them – were just so profound. They were so important for me that day. And they were opening ... I was opening up a channel for this wisdom that was coming through me that was directly for me; it wasn't for anybody else. It was exactly what I needed to hear that day.

And it was simply by putting a blank piece of paper in front of me and imagining that Spirit wanted to write me a note that day. That Spirit wanted to communicate with me. That Spirit wanted to guide me and lead me and show me a higher way to live my life. And just giving myself that blank piece of paper, and being willing to sit down in front of it and write that note, actually began to open doors of wisdom and understanding. And I just believe that we have access to the infinite Mind of God, but we actually have to turn off our rational mind so that we can listen to that which doesn't even feel like it comes from us, but really is the truth of who we are. That's why prayer and meditation always works. It takes us to our deeper place.

And the third thing I want to share with you today is the importance of sleep. *[Laughs]* That, if we're going to live our best life, we have to get quality sleep. *[Laughs]* I was reminded by Sue today ... In the early 2000s, I had an opportunity to spend time with a small group of people with the Dalai Lama. And the question that I posed to the Dalai Lama during this interchange over three days was: What is it that we can do to move our planet forward? What is it that we can do to change the world?

And I was expecting this real insightful, deep, profound, spiritual – maybe esoteric ... You know, like this meditation or this secret thing. He said, *"Get better sleep."* *[Congregation laughs]* And I felt a little robbed, you know? *[Congregation laughs]* I want the good stuff, you know? And his whole point was: If you can't sleep – you do not sleep and if you're not rested – you can't do the work. If you're not rested, you can't move your life forward.

And the research on sleep is really phenomenal. Do you know one of the number one things they say to do to get a better quality night's sleep? Is throw away that nasty pillow that you have. Now, I know none of you ever have a nasty pillow *[laughs]*, but they're saying that we should be changing our pillow every three to four months. Did you know that? That they just get nasty. *[Congregation laughs]* Right? Anybody had a pillow longer than you've been married? *[Congregation and Rev. Rogers laugh]*

You know, every so often, my pillow is just gone. Like, my wife just takes it! I don't know what she does with them, but they just disappear! And it's like, I feel I just get them broken in, but you know, it might have been five years with this pillow, right? *[Congregation laughs]* And she's like, *"No; you sweat. It's got to go."* Right?

And so one of the things they say is that a higher quality sleep allows us to have a better experience. And that, as we sleep, the research shows that if you darken your room, you cool the room before you go to bed, you practice deep breathing before you go to bed, maybe take a bath, exercise on a daily basis, and also banish LED/LCD lights from your room – all the screens, all the TVs, all the computers, all the laptops, smart phones ... just get them out of your room so that you can actually close your eyes and be still ... Studies show that coffee after 2 o'clock or alcohol can actually impact your sleep.

And the fourth point that allows us to maximize and thrive is to move. That we need to move as much as we can for as long as we can. Isaac Newton, in the 1700s, said that the Law of Motion was that an object in motion wants to stay in motion, and an object at rest wants to stay at rest. The benefits of exercise are an enhanced mood, reduced stress, greater energy, improved health. That we have to move! We have to move!

So you ready for your homework? You ready? Okay; so here's what I want from you. This week I want you to rewrite your definition of success for your life today. I don't want you to be relying on the one that's a year old or five years or 10 years old. I want you to decide what success is for you today. I want you to be looking at how often everything you're doing is causing you to expand, or is it causing you to contract? And then I also want you to really pay attention to how much are you opening to prayer, to meditation, to sleeping, and to movement?

That we have to be willing to look at both our spiritual nature and our physical nature. And that, when our physical nature and our spiritual nature are working at the highest level, that everything – our mental and our emotional life – they just come along. But when our emotional things are out of focus, then it's often because spiritually or physically we are not taking care of ourselves. So next week we're going to talk about the mental and the emotional aspects of thriving. Are you ready?

I want you to take a deep breath and join with me in a moment of prayer. And today we recommit to thriving. I WILL THRIVE. I want you to put on that mindset: I WILL THRIVE. That, whatever's going on in my life today, I WILL THRIVE. Mentally, emotionally, spiritually: I WILL THRIVE. In the name and through the power of the Living Christ, we give thanks. And so it is. Amen.

God bless you! Have a great week, and thanks for being here!

[Congregation applauds]

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