

## THRIVE-Part 2

Week #2 of the 2-Week Series

August 29, 2021

Rev. Richard Rogers

**Rev. Richard Rogers:** So last week I began a series on the idea of what it was going to take for you to THRIVE. And the question I began with last week is: Is it okay for you to thrive? And what I really want you to really take some time to contemplate that. Because there's stuff going on in the world today. You know, we've got this storm coming in from the Gulf. And the people of Louisiana. You know, the 16th anniversary of Katrina, and there's a major hurricane coming into the Gulf. And so we want to hold them in prayer. We've got everything going on in Afghanistan. And the list of things that I could name right now that are going on in the world is very long. Right?

And so when there's so much going on in the world, sometimes we feel almost a little guilty if we're having a great life. And it's like: Why should I have a great life when there's so much struggling in the world today? And what I'd like to suggest today is that you having a great life – you thriving – is the way that we move this world forward.

Like, right now, if you're turning your light down, that's exactly the wrong direction. Right? That we actually need you to be your best self right now. We need you to live your best life. Jesus said, *"If I be lifted up, I draw all people unto me."* And it's this idea that, any time your life gets better – any time you're living more of your God-presence within; any time any one of us takes a step forward – at some level, it gets easier for all of us. Right? As any one of us gets happier, more loving, more blessed in any way, there is a spiritual connection that we all have. And your life gets better.

So the question is: Is it okay for you to thrive in the world today? And my next question – the one I want to focus on this week – is: What do you need to fully thrive in your life today? And I'd like you to spend some time in prayer with that. I'd like you to actually consider what you need to thrive in your life right now.

And usually we think about outer things: *"Well, if I won [laughs] Powerball, of course I would thrive!"* Right? And this idea that the outer can fix the inner is one of the great illusions of our time. Right? I believe that, for us to thrive, we actually have to express more of the goodness, more of the Spirit, more of the life that we were born to live. That it doesn't ever happen from the outside in; it really is an inside job. And for you to thrive, it really is about you living all of who you are: being the best version of you.

So last week we focused on four things. We began by looking at the four aspects of our nature. We looked at the spiritual, the physical, the mental and the emotional. And last week we focused on two of them: the spiritual and the physical.

And what we focused on last week was this idea that the soul either expands or contracts. And to look at everything in your life: is this causing you to expand or contract? And, you know, is that conversation – is that situation – causing an expansion within you or a contraction within you? Then we also focused on the idea of taking, really accessing, more of the inner wisdom. And listening: taking time for prayer and meditation.

And then the physical aspects we talked about last week was sleep and movement. The research is huge that the better the quality of sleep that we have, the better the quality of our health. And also movement: the more we move, the more healthy we are. So that's where we focused last week.

So this week we're going to focus on the mental and the emotional aspect of thriving. And so the first point I want to make today is that, if we're going to thrive, I believe that we have to have a mindset of faith. We actually have to practice believing.

Now, that may sound simplistic, right? But I'm going to challenge you today to say: How much time and energy do you actually spend believing? Believing that things are going to work out? Believing that you're blessed? Believing that there's a path? Believing!

How many of you remember [laughs] ... sorry! How many of you remember the old Monkeys song, "I'm a Believer?" Right? [Laughs] [Quotes song:] "Then I saw her face / Now I'm a believer / Not a trace of doubt in my mind / I'm in love / Oooooooh!" [Congregation laughs] That was always my favorite part of the song, right? "I'm in love ..." Go with me! [With congregation]: "Oooooooh!" / I'm a believer / I couldn't leave her if I tried." [Laughs]

And I want you to really look at: How much time and energy do you spend being a believer? And I'm going to make a case that you can't truly thrive in your life until you're a believer. Right? Because you can have really good stuff in your life, but if you come from a place of, "It's not going to work" ... Right? Then you can't really open to all the good that God is!

And I'm going to suggest that there's four things that I want you to see if you really believe in. The first one is: Do you believe in God? Do you believe that there's a Power at work in your life that is enrolled within you that is guiding you, leading you, directing you? Do you believe in God?

And do you believe in your own connection with that God? Do you believe that God is expressing through you? That God's not "out there" somewhere, but God is within you, expressing through you?

And then, do you believe that you can overcome every hurdle in life? And that's where it gets a little dicey for some of us. Because some of us believe that some of the hurdles – or some of the challenges – are actually bigger than we are. That are bigger than the power of God within us. And when we talk about it, we say, "Oh, my gosh!" about this or, "Oh, my gosh!" about that, or "Oh, my gosh; I hope this doesn't happen."

And what I want you to really see is: There's something so incredibly empowering when you become a believer: When you believe that the power of God within you is greater than anything in the world. That it changes the way that we relate to life! It changes our willingness to overcome, and it changes our own ability to believe that we can overcome anything.

And then the fourth aspect of believing is really believing that we have the power to create. That we have the power to create our greatest life.

So do you believe? I am a believer. Will you say that with me? [With congregation:] "I am a believer." One more time. [With congregation:] "I am a believer." And I believe I will thrive. Together. [With congregation:] "And I believe I'm going to thrive."

I'm going old-school on my quote this morning: Marcus Aurelius about 150 AD said this:

*"True understanding is to see the events of life in this way: 'You are here for my benefit, though rumor paints you otherwise.' And everything is turned to one's advantage when he greets a situation like this: 'You are the very thing I was looking for.' Truly whatever arises in life is the right material to bring about your growth and the growth of those around you. This, in a word, is art-- and this art called 'life' is a practice suitable to both men and gods. Everything contains some special purpose and a hidden blessing; what then could be strange or arduous when all of life is here to greet you like an old and faithful friend?"*

Okay? So what's he saying? He's saying that, when anything comes to you in your life, if you greet it out of fear, that that is not a statement of faith. I want you to see that. When anything arrives in your life, if we greet it out of a sense of dread or fear or upset, we have missed the point. That, as a believer, that when anything comes into our life, we're to greet it as an old friend that is here to bless us.

See, then no matter what comes into your life. Jesus said, *"In the world there is tribulation; but be of good cheer, for I have overcome the world."* There is that state of consciousness – that state of mind, if you will – that is a state of faith that allows us to truly believe and overcome any situation in life.

So what I want you to look at today is: What are you afraid of? What is the fear, the concern, the worry that is keeping you from thriving today? That is causing you to be hesitant or fearful or to draw back or to hide or to limit yourself, your family and your friends? And today I'm going to invite you to step up and be a believer. I'm going to invite you to believe that the power of God in you allows you to overcome every situation.

I am a believer. Will you say that with me? *[With congregation:] "I am a believer."*

See, the moment you actually entertain that thought ... That you could actually greet every day as a believer, and that whatever comes into your life – whatever the situation, whatever the condition -- is actually here to greet it as an old friend, here to make you stronger, wiser, braver. To allow you to greet every situation from a greater possibility. *"I am a believer!"*

See, without believing, everything in your life gets harder! Without believing, it's just kind of your feeble little self trying to take on the world, and we don't really believe that we can overcome it. There's a spiritual thing that happens when you mentally put on this idea that you accept that in yourself that is willing to believe. When you begin to practice that. *"I believe! I believe! I believe that I'm greater than this situation. I believe that I can overcome this situation. I believe that I'm going to be blessed today. I believe I'm going to be healed today. I believe that I can overcome this situation."*

The moment that you practice believing, everything begins to change. One more time. I am a believer. Together. *[With congregation:] "I am a believer."*

Two. So not only do I want you to be a believer, but I actually want you to begin to practice quieting your mind. How many of you know that your thoughts kind of get out ahead of you? And they get a little weird? Right? Like, from a spiritual point of view, right?

I actually want you to practice uncoupling your thoughts from the experience. What do I mean by that? Well, we're having one experience after another in life. True? And we just go from one moment to the next moment; we have one experience after another. And yet, we tend to have a constant narration of thought going on about every experience.

What I'm going to ask you to do today to truly thrive, is to actually uncouple the thought from the experience. Not that I would wish this on anybody, but imagine on the way home today, you have a flat tire. And you know, when you realize you have a flat tire, you're probably going to have some thoughts about that. Right? Like, *"Oh, no! What did I do? I knew I should have checked the tires"* Or whatever, whatever, whatever. Right? You go into this whole, long, lengthy thought process. And the reality is: You just have a flat tire! Right? You call AAA, or you call a friend, or you change the tire yourself. And the whole experience is over in an hour. But in that hour, were you at peace in that situation? Or was it just a constant roaring of thought causing you to be anything happy?

See, I don't think we can truly thrive until we learn to uncouple our thoughts from the experience. Because the best experiences in your life, you weren't thinking at all! You were just in the experience! You were just in the moment. And when we add our unnecessary thoughts to those experiences, we just pollute them. We degrade them. We actually muddy the water. So who would you be if you could actually uncouple your thoughts from the experience, and just be in the experience?

See, there's that amazing thing that happens when our mind becomes quiet. It actually opens the door for our intuition. See, there's three aspects of us: we have our thoughts; we have the experience; and then we have our intuition. And our intuition is really the way that God speaks to us; the way that God whispers in our heart and our soul. And when our mind is quiet, we actually hear the intuition of Spirit much clearer, and it's much brighter. It's much easier to discern.

And many of us, when we have a creative project – when there’s a heart’s desire to create something – many of us, when we know what we want to create, we then shift into our intellect and ask ourselves the question: How am I going to do this? Right? How is it this is going to happen? And then we get busy in our own mind creating this whole plan for how this is going to happen.

And what I want you to see today is: There’s a whole different way that we can be creating. And when you have this desire in your heart, instead of then moving into your intellectual nature and just getting busy creating plans and ideas and solutions, instead we could just shift even lower and move into our intuition. And we could just then be in the question: “*Spirit, how do I get there? How do I create this?*” And our mind could actually become still waiting for the Spirit of God to speak to us!

So many of us, if we’re going to thrive, there’s greater things we want to create in our life. And, yes! You can create from your intellect. But what happens for many of us when our head can’t come up with a plan ... Because sometimes the good that God wants to give us is so good that our head can’t even imagine how to get there! And so we actually give up on the desire. We give up on the goal. We give up on the creative project, because our mind can’t handle that much good.

And, instead, we could just say, “*As good as this is, Spirit, how can I walk the path to this? How do I move into that level of good?*” And we allow our intuition to lead us into a greater life. And when we can uncouple our thoughts – when we can still our mind – we can actually thrive, because we can actually create a higher level of good than we ever could from our intellect.

And I’m not saying that we should trash talk our intellect. I just don’t think we should lead from it. I think your intellect is a wonderful gift that God has given you. But it shouldn’t be on 24/7. You should just turn it on like a computer, and when you no longer need it, turn it off. And some of us haven’t ever felt the joy of having a quiet mind. Having a mind that’s at peace.

And the more that we are willing to thrive, the more we can no longer be victims to all the thought process that goes on within us. That we have to access this higher level of Intelligence through our intuition. That there’s a higher level of good for us. There’s a higher level that we can know, but that our mind may not always be able to figure out. But our intuition always knows the way! Right?

So the first one I want you to do is: I want you to practice being a believer. Second thing I want you to do is: Actually learn to quiet your mind, and turn on your intuition to a higher level. The third thing I want you to do to fully thrive is: I want you to try.

How many of you remember seeing *Star Wars* when Yoda says to him, “*Do or do not. There is no try.*” Right? And there’s this idea – this spiritual kind of arrogant idea – that we don’t try. We either do it or we don’t do it. And what I’d like to suggest today is: I want you to try things [*laughs*] that you’ve never done before. Because trying new things creates a better version of you.

Do you know what a closed system is in science? A closed system in science is where the organism has a barrier – for whatever way – that doesn’t allow energy or material to pass through the barrier. So the system is actually closed. Now, is there advantages to closed systems? Yes! There are some advantages to closed systems. But the problem with closed systems is: Over time, they degrade. Right?

If you look at an egg, right? There’s a little chick in that egg. And within that egg is all the nutrition that that chick needs to get big enough and strong enough to break out of the egg. True? But what happens is: That chicken eats that nutrition – and uses that nutrition within that egg – is it creates waste. And waste is toxic, right? So there’s a point in a chicken’s development – a chick’s development – where they have used the vast majority of the nutrition, and it’s created a level of waste that has created the egg to be at a toxic level. So when a chick breaks out of the egg, it is a do-or-die – literally, a do-or-die – situation. Because if it doesn’t break out, the toxicity of the egg prevents it from break out. So it has to break out. Right?

Now why am I sharing that? *[Laughs]* Because it's kind of bleak, right? I believe that, as we get older, we tend to do more and more of the same things. Now, as we get older, we tend to want to do those things that we believe that we're going to have a high degree of success in doing. We eat the foods that we like to eat. We go to the places we like to go to. We talk to the people we like to talk to. We watch the TV or the programs or read the books. And it tends to become a closed system.

And the problem with a closed system is: It doesn't allow new information for us to really thrive. For us to really grow. It creates more and more and more of the same. And as we ... Like, when you're five, everything is brand new. Right? Everything is brand new! You've never been to school before. You've never met these people before ... Everything is brand new!

Well, when you get to be 85, the level of "newness" in your life tends to get very small. And wherever you are in this scheme of things, I want to suggest today that, for you to thrive, you need to do at least one new thing. You need to try one new thing. I don't care if it's sushi; I don't care if it's a new author. I don't care if it's rap. I want you to try something new every day so that you do not become a closed system. I want you being filled *[laughs]* every day with brand new information.

I am brand new and I thrive. Together! *[With congregation:] "I am brand new and I thrive."* One more time like we actually mean it! *[With congregation:] "I am brand new and I thrive!"* One more time, just for grins! *[With congregation:] "I am brand new and I thrive."*

So does it makes sense to you that doing what is regular and normal is death? *[Congregation laughs]* It is! Right? Because it just continues to be a little velvet rut that is all pretty and normal, and everything is controlled. But if you don't get out of the rut, there is no growth. There's nothing new. We have to try. We have to get out and try new things.

Now four. The fourth point I wanted to make today is my last one. And that is: As we cultivate faith – as we practice believing – we actually create the emotion of peace. As we learn to quiet our mind, we create peace.

I'm going to suggest today that peace is an element of thriving. That as our mind becomes still – as we begin to believe that all things are possible – we actually create a deeper level of peace that's transformative. When you're not worried, you're at peace. When you're content with the world around you, you are at peace. When you feel loved, you are at peace. As we thrive – as we move to higher and higher levels of good – what I want you to be checking in on is: Are you moving to deeper levels of peace? Is your peace getting deeper and broader every day as you're experiencing more and more of God? Because the idea of thriving without peace, isn't thriving.

If we're getting more stuff in our life, but our anxiety is getting higher and higher and higher, we are not thriving. To truly thrive, we have to be moving to a deeper level of peace. If you're worried about this or that, you're not thriving. If you're not coming daily into a deep level of peace – through prayer, through meditation, through quiet walks, through contemplation, through great music or connections with friends – I want you to be cultivating deeper and deeper levels of peace in your life.

Because if you're fretting, right? Do you ever fret? I love that word! Right? Do you ever fret? Where you're just kind of worried about this or that, and now you're worrying about this? *"And now I'm worried about that. And, oh, what about this? And, oh, what about that?"* That we never get to a level of peace that is transformative. I want you to have such a deep level of peace, that whatever is going on in your life, you know that it's going to be okay.

I am at peace and I thrive. Together! *[With congregation:] "I am at peace and I thrive."* One more time. *[With congregation:] "I am at peace and I thrive."*

So you ready for your homework? So I want you to begin by actually contemplating your thriving. Like, what would it take for you to thrive? What would it look like? What would you need to really thrive in

your life? Then I want you to really explore: Am I a believer? Do I believe in God? Do I believe in myself? Do I believe in possibilities? Do I believe that I can overcome anything in life?

And then I want you to practice uncoupling your thoughts: to actually letting your mind become quiet, so that you can feel the gentle guidance of Spirit.

And then I want you to be trying new things all the time! I want you to be so amazed, because you're trying new foods, you're reading new books, you're entertaining new ideas. You're entertaining a newness, a freshness of Spirit. Buddhism calls it "beginner's mind." And that we're just open to a new level of good.

And the last thing I want is: I want you to notice on a regular basis that you're living at a greater level of peace. That there's a peace within your soul that is healing. That's transformative. That is not only making a difference to you, but that peace is making a difference in the world. Because when one person touches peace – true peace – it impacts all those around them. That the more that you live from your inner peace, the more you change the world.

You ready? Are you willing to try? I know it's a lot of homework this week, but I believe in you! You can do it! Let's take it into prayer.

I invite you to open your mind, your heart, your soul to the activity of God that is right here, right now. That there is only one Presence and one Power: God the Good. And today we open our mind to thrive. We quiet our mind that we may feel the peace of our soul. So in all things we look to God, and in all things we give thanks. And so it is. Amen.

God bless you all; have a great week! Thanks for being here!

*[Congregation applauds]*

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