

TAKE A BOLD ACTION

Final Week of the 5-Week Series, "Conscious Luck"

October 13, 2021

Rev. Richard Rogers

Rev. Richard Rogers: Have you ever bailed on yourself? *[Congregation laughs]* You know, I am of the age where my kids are now consistently informing that I'm using slang incorrectly. *[Congregation laughs]* Right? And so I looked this one up! I wanted to make sure I was using it correctly! The slang for bail means: to leave, to cancel, to back out of something as in, for example, "I am so annoyed with Lizzy; she bailed out on the party last night." Right?

So my question for you tonight is: Have you ever bailed out on yourself? Have you ever not given yourself the thing you wanted? Have you ever not taken the step? Have you ever backed out of something that you knew was the highest and best for you, but – for whatever reason – fear, insecurity, worry, upset, other people's opinion, you actually backed down? Right? Everybody's had that experience at least once, right?

I want to talk about that experience. I want to talk about what creates those moments, where even in the depths of our heart and our soul, we know we're called to do something. And, for whatever reason, we just don't do it! Like, we know in our heart Spirit's calling us; we can feel that guidance. We can feel that direction. And we're on the edge of a possibility: maybe a possibility that we've never lived before. And all we have to do is step into it. And, for whatever reason, we back down. We bail! We get so scared, or we're worried about other people's ideas or opinions, or whatever it is. And we just don't let ourselves have the breakthrough that we could have.

When I was about eight or nine, a bunch of neighborhood kids all around my age: we decided that we were going to ride our bikes to the public pool; it was the high school. And our parents all signed off on it, so one day during the summer we all went off to the public pool. And the high school pool had a high dive, right? So we were messing around all day, you know, just on the edge of getting into trouble. And finally we decided it was time to just gather our courage and go jump off – or dive off – the high dive. Right?

And so I'm little – eight or nine. I don't know why my parents let me ride across town on my bike, but they did. I mean *[laughs]*, I never would have allowed that! But times were different, and away we go. And we're there. And so we're all lined up on the ladder to the high dive.

Now, the way that it worked is: there might be 10 or 15 kids that felt like, all on the ladder at the same time, going up to the high dive. So the kids – you know, you're just right behind the kid in front of you. right? And what happened is – well, what happened for me, anyway – is I took my time, got up there, right? Got up to the top. There were two handrails on each side. Got up to the top, and realized at that moment that I was going to die. *[Congregation laughs]* Like, it was not a question; I knew if I jumped, I was going to die. Right?

And I had to make a decision in that moment. Was I going to die from the force of the water crushing me? Or was I going to die from being harassed by my buddies, who were behind me? But I knew that, either way, this was a death sentence. Right? I knew that, either way, that there was just no graceful way out of this experience. Like, I couldn't pray myself and just be sucked off the diving board: you know, rapture right there in that moment. Right? It just wasn't possible. I had to make a choice.

How many of you want to vote that the bold action – the bold choice – was to jump? How many of you *[laughs]* want to vote that the bold choice was to go back down the ladder against all of your friends, and deal with harassment every day for the rest of your life? Right?

Well, guess what I chose? [*Congregant: "Jump!"*] No! [*Congregation laughs*] I didn't! And I am man enough to admit it! I backed down. I took the harassment. I took the ridicule. I took the embarrassment. I took the shame. And for years – a couple of years, anyway – it was a place of, "*Gosh! Why didn't I just do it?*" But later, there was a moment where I realized that every experience after that moment was different because I didn't jump.

And what I mean by that is: when you're eight or nine, going through elementary school and junior high and high school and college, and all those experiences ... At that moment, I learned that peer pressure was never going to kill me. I learned that the best that my friends could do to harass me was better than dying. Right?

And what I realized in that moment – that, in so many ways, that moment at eight or nine – became a defining moment for the rest of my life. That I realized that I was never ever going to do something that was against myself. That was not in my best interest. Even though I was going to get harassed for it. Like, there was no level of harassment that was worth me making a bad choice for.

And I'm not saying I never made bad choices. But I never made a bad choice in my life because I was worried about what other people were going to say. Because, at eight or nine, if I could take the kids that were the closest to me, and the most meaningful ... If I could take their harassment – and, trust me: there was harassment! Now, did it go on my whole life? No; I think it went on for about three days. Right? Or any time anybody told the story of how Rogers didn't go off the high dive, the harassment started up again.

But I realized, wow! The thing that I was must frightened of literally had no power over me. It was no longer going to define my actions. And, at that moment, I realized that the boldest choice that I could have made – the boldest choice that I did make – was confronting the thing that looked the scariest. Right? And that was my buddies' harassing me.

And today what I want you to look at is: I believe that, over and over and over again, and I believe that, in so many ways, we – as a society – are on the edge of a possibility. And that we're either going to step into the fullness of this possibility, or we're not. And sometimes the bold action – the bold step: the thing that changes everything – isn't the big thing that your ego wants you to do. It's actually a quiet, deeper acknowledgement that there's something deeper going on here. And that sometimes we need to be able to discern between: is the bold action jumping? Or is the bold action having the courage to say, "*No; that's not mine. That's not for me.*"

Because, over and over again, this is where we are. And what I know to be true is that peer pressure doesn't end at eight. Like, there's peer pressure through our whole life. And then, for some of us, it becomes corporate peer pressure where – because of the job or the situation or the family – we're expected to do something that's not truly in integrity with who we are. And at that moment, we have to make a choice. We have to decide the kind of individual that we're going to be. Are we going to go forward just because it's the easy thing to do? Just because it's the expected thing to do? Or are we going to stay true to ourselves?

You know, as we move through this time, we can really begin to see that there is this opportunity to choose, and maybe choose again. See, tonight is the final week of a series that I've been doing based on a book by Gay Hendricks called *Conscious Luck*. And the first week we started by talking about a commitment to being a lucky person. And last week we talked about releasing the barriers – I mean, the second week was releasing the barriers to good fortune. And we talked about transforming our shame. And having goals that are worthy of luck. And today it's about taking consistent action toward your goals – towards your desires – that are aligned with the truth of who you are: the best version of you.

The words of Gay Hendricks: "*You create an opportunity for luck to appear in your life by taking bold action: trying something new; being more spontaneous; taking risks; asking for what you want. In short,*

getting out of your comfort zone. And the bolder the action you take; think of them as cosmic lottery tickets. The greater the odds of lucky outcomes."

See, what I want you to see tonight is that, for many of us, I believe that most people are one action away from really opening and expanding their life. And that our fears keep us from that level – that next level – of life.

And there's two areas that I really want you to focus on, right? Are you living your dream of your most authentic life? See, I think most of us are living an aspect of it. Most of us are living an aspect of the best version of ourselves. But it's really quite a challenge to live into all that God is calling you to be. To being the very best – the highest. To being so filled with light that you're moving your life forward in the best possible way.

And the second thing is: to tell the truth, I think that many of us are, like, one ... There's one conversation – or one sentence – that we don't want to say that would really change and transform everything. And both of those are bold actions, right? And to be in that conversation really requires a level of vulnerability.

And sometimes people will come up to me and they'll say, "*Richard, I need to give you some feedback on you.*" [Congregation laughs] Right? Now ... [Laughs] What I want you to see is: that's not really a bold conversation, when you're taking someone else's inventory. Right? It's like, you know, you hear from time to time, "*Well, I just had to tell you what I feel. And I really have to tell you what I think or the judgements that I have around you.*" And in the 12 Steps, this is called taking somebody else's inventory. Right? That's not really a bold conversation. That's you crossing the street and actually paying more attention to what's going on in somebody's else's side of the street than paying attention to your own. Right?

That I really want to know in these conversations is: who is that you're being called to be? What is the highest and the best in you that you're on the verge of breaking into Like, what would it look like if you really stepped into the fullness of who you are?

You know, for many of us, the activity of being our best self openly confronts our fears. You know, we have a fear of moving to the next step of who we are. And I want to talk about four ways that we can kind of overcome those fears.

The first one is when we really look at how we're responding to life. You know, many of us are just reacting out of – from situations and choices that we've made over and over again. And it's really almost a sacred moment when we decide not to just react unconsciously, but actually to make a conscious choice how we want to move our life forward.

See, our brain was prewired for flight or fight. And it's prewired. So that, every time we respond from that flight or fight mentality, we're just doing what's been in our DNA for eons. But when we actually make a conscious choice how we want to respond to any situation, at that moment infinite possibilities become available to us. Because we're not acting from the lower part of our brain; we're not reacting from the lizard part of our brain in the back. We're actually reacting to life based on the higher activity of choice that we all have.

Two: we can use the power of our breath to change our body chemistry. Right? Why don't you take a deep breath? And I want you to notice, when you're afraid, how much your breath starts moving closer and closer to your throat. And just by breathing deeply – by breathing into your belly – you actually change where you're functioning from. It changes your chemical relationship that's going on in your brain.

So I want you, just for a moment, just breathe. All the way down in your belly. And it's okay if your belly moves a little bit when you breathe, right? Because nobody really cares. Nobody's paying attention to

your belly. *[Laughs]* And if they are, just redirect them. *[Congregation laughs]* So everyone take a deep breath. And I want you just to feel how much easier it is to be you when you breathe deeply.

And the third way that I want you to look at managing your fears differently ... How many of you have ever heard of the old book by Susan Jeffers called *Feel the Fear and ...* *[Congregation shouts out: "Do it anyway."]* Do it anyway! Do it anyway! And it's this idea that, when you're guided, just because you're afraid, it doesn't mean you can't move through it. That, actually, in the process of being afraid, that you can actually breathe and move through processes just because you make a new choice.

And I'm not really calling us to be daredevils or jump off buildings and stuff. But I want you to see that facing fears and doing it anyway changes everything.

Matt Damon's character in the movie, *We Bought a Zoo* ... Did anybody see that movie? It was a great little movie! *We Bought a Zoo*. Matt Damon. And there's this line from the movie where he says this, *"Sometimes all you need is 20 seconds of insane courage. Literally 20 seconds of embarrassing bravery. And I promise you, something great will come of it."*

Because there's those moments – right? – when your ego tells you to get back, to stay small, to get out of the way. And your spirit just says, *"Go!"* The Latin Proverbs says, *"Fortune favors the bold."* So the third way I want you to see is that, sometimes in your life, you have to be willing just to move forward.

And the fourth way – and I think, by far, the most spiritual – is self-love. In 1 John 4:18 we read, *"There is no fear in love. But perfect love casts out fear, for fear has to do with punishment. And whoever fears has not reached perfection in love."*

See, some of us are so worried that, if we don't do it right, that we're going to be punished. That there's going to be negative consequences. That we have to be perfect all the time. But in the presence of love – real love ... In the presence of unconditional love, there's a boldness – there's a freedom, there's a possibility – that we really have never really touched into. And I want you to see tonight is how different your life would be if you felt unconditionally loved. That you couldn't make a bad choice. That you got to be as bold and as free and as alive as you wanted to be, and that life would support you. That you could really be that fully present in those moments.

1 Timothy says, *"God did not give you a spirit of fear."* And I love that! The Spirit of God did not give you a spirit of fear! So how do we practice this? How do we move into bolder experiences in life?

The first one I want you to see is: I believe there's a power in mixing it up. I think the human part of us wants to organize our life so that we're doing pretty much the same things over and over again. Because then we never have to confront our own fears. If we keep doing – if we eat the same foods and drive in the same direction and talk to the same people ... If we get into a rut that's deep enough, we believe that we're safe.

And what I want you to see is that, the more that we're willing to mix it up – so that means brushing your teeth with your non-dominant hand. *[Congregation laughs]* Or driving to church another way. Or wearing clothes that you don't usually wear.

You know, I was telling this story recently, and somebody said to me, *"Well, I went to a workshop, and the person said that the best way to do this is to start putting your underwear on using the foot that you don't normally use to put on your underwear."* *[Congregation laughs]* Now, I don't know if this is spiritually valid *[laughs]*, but it just made me laugh so hard I couldn't stand it. Right?

So there's all kinds of ways to make a new choice that actually moves us in a new direction, right? So that's one: make new choices. Mix it up.

Second one: I want you to practice saying, “Yes!” more often. One of the things that happens as a parent is that you get used to leading with, “No.” [Congregation laughs] Because most of the things that they ask for, “No” is the appropriate response. Right?

But what happens is: when we get into that habit of saying, “No,” then we’re actually getting into the habit of saying, “No” to ourselves. And what I want you to see ... Anyone seen that movie this year called *Yes Days*? Jennifer Garner? Another cute movie. Jennifer Garner plays this mom who’s saying, “No” all the time. She knows that she’s saying, “No” all the time. And, as a family, they create this game where one day – I think it’s one day out of the month – she has to say ... And there’s rules about ... That nobody gets hurt and that ... But all she gets to say for that one day is, “Yes.” right? She’s got three kids; each one of them gets their own allotted time. And all the parents can say – as long as it doesn’t break these rules – is, “Yes.”

And what begins to happen is mayhem and madness. Right? All the things we fear most as a parent. Right? That things are going to get out of control, and what’s going to happen? And how am I going to do this? And how am I going to save this? And wuh, huh, huh. And it’s a delightful movie! The movie is whatever it is – an hour-and-a-half – of just chaos and madness. But it is so empowering. And you watch as they go through the day of saying, “Yes.” And the whole family comes out more connected to each other.

Like, I want you to see the power of saying, “Yes” in your life. That God is with you. And if God is with you, the possibilities are endless.

And the final thing I want you to hear me say tonight is that it’s appropriate to “go for it.” Whatever it is! It’s appropriate to go for it. Jimmy Carter said this: *“To go out on the limb, because that’s where the fruit is.”* Right? And there is this part of us that’s being called to step out in faith, and to believe in possibilities that we’ve never known before.

Anybody remember the old *Indiana Jones* movies? I want to show you a clip. Are you willing to see a clip? Let’s go to the Indiana Jones clip.

[Shows film clip]

Indiana Jones is standing on a tremendously high ledge looking out on an enormous canyon, with no visible way to get to the other side, where Indiana wants to go.

Indiana: “Impossible. Nobody can jump this.”

Cut to scene of Indiana’s father writhing in pain.

Dr. Marcus Brody shouts at Indiana: “Indy! Indy, you must hurry! Come quickly!”

Indiana takes a deep breath. “It’s a leap of faith.”

Cut to scene of Indiana’s father saying, “You must believe, boy. You must believe.”

Indiana clutches his heart, takes a deep breath, and sets his jaw determinedly. He closes his eyes, takes several more deep breaths, and sticks one foot out in front of him ... then takes a huge step into the air – into nothingness. Like a miracle, a stone pathway appears under his foot and keeps him from falling. He carefully takes another step and another across the bridge. He smiles, sighs with relief, and continues stepping more confidently to cross the bridge to the other side.

Isn’t that a fabulous scene? Right? And what I want you to see in your life right now is: I believe that we are all on the edge of something greater in our life. And that, in this moment – as we have the courage to take the next step in a direction that we don’t usually step – everything changes. The possibility for you, for your family, for the world really depends on each one of us – in our own way – taking a bold action. Taking a bold step and trusting that the Spirit of God is right there!

Because in that clip – what I love about it – is that that bridge, that support, was always there! He just couldn't see it! But it was always there! That all the support that you have ever wanted – all the support that that you have ever needed; all the support that you've ever prayed for – has always been there. But until you take the step, you don't know that. And you don't really believe it. But the moment you step out, and you feel the infinite support of God – of your Creator – then every other step gets easier.

See, I believe that you're being asked to take a new step in a new direction, and allow that to be your best step.

Will you join with me in prayer?

I invite you to open your mind, your heart, your soul to the activity of God that is right here, right now. And that we give thanks for the way Spirit lifts us up. For the way Spirit calls us into a greater possibility. And, Holy Spirit, give us the faith and the strength and the wisdom to know which of the steps that we are called to take, and which we're not. For we are willing to step into a greater life. So in the name and through the power of the Living Christ, we give thanks. And so it is. Amen.

Copyright 2021 Unity of Phoenix Spiritual Center/Rev. Richard Rogers