

# GRATEFUL FOR MY SOUL

Week #3 of the 5-Week Series, "40 Days of Gratitude"

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Rev. Richard Rogers

**Rev. Richard Rogers:** Alright! So here's where I want to start tonight. So I want you to think of something in your life that, when it was happening to you, you were anything but grateful for.

**[Congregation laughs]** 'Kay? And then a week, a month, maybe months later, maybe even years later, you realized that -- because that thing happened that you really were maybe upset about ... maybe you were ticked off with God about ... right? -- that actually turned out to be such a huge blessing in your life. Right?

Can everybody think of one or two things that, at the time, your ego might have just been hot mad about it? Right? And then, later, you go, "*Man; thank God I am not in charge!*" Right? "*Cause if I would have really got that, ughhhhhh.*" **[Congregation laughs]** "*That would have been a train wreck.*" Right?

Because what I want us to see over and over again: I want you to see the role of your soul. Like, you know, as we move into the holiday season, for many of us, we start decorating our homes, we do all these extra little things here and there. And tonight what I really want to talk about is the way that you're decorating your soul. Right? The way that you are really bringing your best into who you are.

Because one of the things that I believe to be so is that your soul holds your dominant -- both your dominant emotions and your dominant thoughts. And sometimes our dominant thoughts and our dominant emotions are not as close to God as maybe they could be. **[Congregation laughs]** And that kind of begins to impact the way we shine within.

And as we move into this holiday season, I want to make sure that you're glowing with all that God is. Right? And that we not miss this opportunity. Because sometimes we don't really get to experience the downside of our disappointments or our resentments or our upset or our anger. We think because we have free will that we can throw these things around and they don't have any impact on us. Right?

But when we're consistently or regularly upset ... When we're regularly ticked off ... When we're regularly angry or sad or disappointed, it begins to impact the way that our soul shines with God. And I want to make sure today that we're ... we're doing a little "do-it-yourself" project tonight. Right? We're going to kind of get out the old buffing cloth, and kind of shine up our soul a little bit so that we're absolutely glowing with God.

So tonight I want to talk about your soul. And the difficulty with talking about your soul is, you know ... I'm kind of a bit of a philosophy geek. I always loved philosophy in college. I loved it in seminary. And I loved looking at the way that different philosophies look at the nature of things, and how they understand the nature of life. And how they understand all that we're doing.

But when you look at the nature of the soul from a philosophical point of view, you see a huge amount of differences between all the religions: how they understand the soul. You look at Christianity, Judaism, Hinduism, Buddhism: all have a very kind of different -- sometimes radically different! If you look at Islam's understanding of the soul as opposed to Christianity, it's different!

And as I was preparing for this talk **[laughs]**, there was a part of me that kind of wanted to diagram all these things out. And it was just like, "*Richard; waaaay too much! Dial this thing back!*" Right?

So what we're going to do tonight is -- with the time that I have -- we're just going to look at Unity's understanding of the soul. And hopefully that will be helpful in understanding your own understanding of the soul. Alright?

So there's really four things I want to look at tonight. I want you to understand Unity's understanding of the nature of the soul; Unity's understanding of what soul healing means, and how that happens; Unity's understanding of the pivotal role of the soul; and the infinite flexibility of the soul. Right?

So we're going to focus on Unity. Charles Fillmore is the co-founder of Unity with his wife, Myrtle. I'm going to be reading a couple of quotes from Charles Fillmore. And this is from Metaphysics I. And the commentary that was written by Rev. Ed Rable, who was one of my faculty members when I was in seminary. And I think it's kind of helpful. Because, for most of us, we kind of use the idea of spirit and soul interchangeably. Most people do, right? The idea that your spirit and your soul are kind of the same thing. Well, in Unity's understanding, they are not the same thing. So I want to kind of dial that in so that we understand the difference.

This is Charles Fillmore. And I'm not going to get so heady *[laughs]* that you're all ... well, maybe some of you will be asleep. *[Congregation laughs]* But by the end, I think this is going to be informative and useful and practical in your own life, okay?

So the soul is: *Man's consciousness; the underlying idea back of any expression. In man, the soul is the many accumulated ideas back of his present expression. In its original and true sense, the soul of man is the expressed idea of man in Divine Mind.*

So the way that Unity understands the soul is: the soul is the sum total of all your conscious and unconscious awareness. Right? So all your beliefs -- those that you're aware of; those that you aren't aware of. It is all your past experiences. All of that makes up the realm of what we call the soul.

*"The one-and-only object of man's existence is the development of his soul. And any attainment -- whether mental or material -- that cannot be associated with or counted to aid toward this end will be utterly refused."*

Ed Rable: *"Many true students find it difficult to understand what is meant by the soul. One of the reasons for this confusion is that different schools of thought use different terms in defining the soul. In spite of these differences, there needs not be difficulty in dealing with the word 'soul,' because in Unity's terminology, it is simply the name given to the entire area of your awareness. We're not certain of its full potential or its limitations, but any part of your being -- which includes all sorts of awareness -- is referred to as your soul. Jesus declared that the most important thing about a person -- his worth -- is his soul. He said, 'It is not for profit that a man gain the whole world, but forfeit his soul.'"*

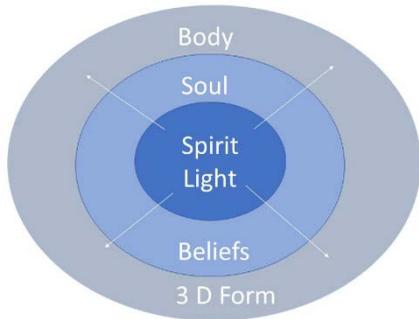
Moving on, where he talks about the body, because I want to see the connection between the body and the soul.

*"God created the IDEA of the body of man as a self-perpetuating, self-renewing organism, which man reconstructs into his personal body. God creates the body idea, or divine idea, and man, by his thinking, makes it manifest. As God created man, in His image and likeness by the power of His word, so man, as God's image and likeness, projects his body by the same power. All thoughts and ideas embody themselves according to their character. Material thoughts make a material body. Spiritual thoughts make a spiritual body."*

And one more, and then I'm going to go off.

Activating the trinity: *"Man sets into action any of the three realms of his being, spirit, soul and body, by concentrating his thought on them. If he thinks only of the body, the physical senses encompass all his existence. If mind and emotion are cultivated he adds soul to his consciousness. If he rises to the Absolute and comprehends Spirit, he rounds out the God-man."*

Okay, let's show this first slide.



So here's what I want you to see. Because, if you talk about the soul without being in context, it doesn't make a lot of sense, right? Because spirit, soul and body are the threefold natures of humankind. Right? And the spirit, in Unity's understanding: the spirit is the place where you are forever one with God. 'Kay? Your spiritual nature is whole and complete the moment it is created. Right?

So when God gave you life -- God gave you a spiritual life -- at that moment, your spirit was fully intact. Right? So when we say that, you know, you come to church or you do your spiritual work, and it implies that you're actually healing or changing or transforming your spirit. And there couldn't be anything further from the truth. Right? There's no spiritual work to do at the level of spirit. Because spirit: you're already whole and complete and lacking in nothing. Your spirit was created in the image and likeness of God. That is your essence; that is the core of who you are: is your spiritual nature.

Now, the next level up ... Anybody, like in the 60s or 70s, had ... They put out a Jell-O 1-2-3 cup? You know what those were? Is anybody old enough to remember that? I'm probably the only one. But a Jell-O 1-2-3 cup was like a parfait thing. And you would mix it all up. And it just had to have so many chemicals in it **[congregation laughs]**, because it separated into three levels. So the bottom was kind of creamy, like almost like an ice-creamy thing. The middle level was kind of the middle ground.

And I'm sure it was just a science project gone bad. **[Congregation laughs]** And then the top level was just pure Jell-O. Right? So it was the Jell-O 1-2-3 cup. And as a kid, they were one of our favorite desserts, because there were three levels. You mixed it all together, and then it kind of separated like, you know, a bad tide pool. And then you gave it to kids, and they ate it; we liked it, right? **[Congregation laughs]** And it was fabulous! Right?

So **[laughs]** what I want you to see is: when we look at your spirit. Put it back up there. They don't need to see me. Truly; they don't need to see me. Right?

When you look at your spirit, your spirit is the part ... that is your core. That is your essence. That is your divine nature. Right? Now, when we get to your soul, your soul is interesting. Because your soul is made up of everything that you believe. It is the memory of every experience you've ever had. It's what gives flavor to your spirit. It's what adds to who you are as an expression of God.

But your soul ... Now, any healing that needs to happen, happens at the soul level. 'Cause your soul is the place that holds all your beliefs. How many of you know that you've had a weird belief in the past? Like, you believe in fear, negativity or whatever? That's all being held in the soul. Right? So it's the soul that is really the level where we do work. So we say we're doing "spiritual work," but what we're really doing -- in Unity's understanding -- is doing soul work. We're actually perfecting our soul. We're healing our soul, so that our soul reflects all the good of our spirit.

Now, how many of you have heard the idea that the inside creates the outside? Right? So what we believe is that the final level -- the physicality, the last level of the 1-2-3 cup, right? -- is this idea of physical manifestation. That the out-picturing of your spirit and your soul happens in a body and in the three-dimensional world. So as you change your soul, you change your three-dimensional world.

Let's go to the next slide. Now ... There it is ...

So what I want you to see is: can you see the little white arrows? Right? So what I want you to see is: the spirit is often called light. And when the light within you shines forth through your soul, your soul then is the out-picturing. Everything you believe on the inside is then out-pictured in your body and in the



world. And the reason that has to be is because you can't heal what you can't see. Does that make sense?

So every time ... Any belief that you have about yourself, about your world, about lack, about limitation -- any belief that you have about your world -- has to shine ... The light shines through it, and then you see it manifested in the world around you. And it has to happen like that, because you can't heal what you can't see.

And the reason that so many people that are all in your life right now all around you is so that they can out-picture what you believe. So the whole world is an out-picture of your belief system.

So, as you heal any belief at the level of your soul, it changes the out-picturing, and then you see a healing in your body. You see a healing in your finances. Or you see a healing in a relationship. But the real work is always at the level of the soul. So, as you heal your soul, you heal your life. Right?

And so that's why you can move from here to Cleveland, right? And within a matter of minutes, you're going to pretty much create the same life over again. **[Congregation laughs]** Because it's not the geographic area that creates your life; it's YOU. And, unfortunately, you can't get away from you! **[Congregation laughs]** That's both the good news and the bad news, right? Like, you just can't get away from you!

So it means that, whatever is going on in your life right now -- if you look around you; you look at your three-dimensional world -- you see that everything in your life right now is an out-picturing of your soul. So if you're not loving your life, then we have to make a change on the inside at the level of the soul to change the belief, to change the thought, to change the emotion, to change the resentment, to change the upset, to change the disappointment. To change at the level of the soul so that you're actually out-picturing more and more of your spirit, and less and less of your woundedness.

Now, as you heal at the level of your soul, what begins to happen is that your soul actually becomes more and more transparent. Right? So, as you heal -- and your soul becomes more and more transparent -- as the light shines through it, what do people notice about you? They notice the love. They notice the God. They notice your presence. They notice your peace. So they notice when they're experiencing more and more of the presence of God within you, because there's less and less blocks.

Now, we all know times in our life ... We know people in our life ... And at some times in our own life, and sometimes in the life of other people, it's really hard to see God in them. **[Congregation laughs]** Does everybody have at least one person in your life, right? That sometimes it challenges to see God in them? And it's because, in that moment, both your issues match up so well that all you see is your issues. But, as you heal, more and more and more at the soul level -- as you let go of all the old, erroneous beliefs about yourself and your world -- you actually become more and more transparent, and God shines through you in greater and greater ways.

That's why you cannot afford to have unforgiveness. You just can't afford it! Because what happen is that: light shines through your unforgiveness, and you create more and more experiences until you're willing to forgive it. That's why you can't afford resentment. You can't afford anger. You can't afford anything that's less than good; less than God. Because, as the light shines through you, it's going to pick it up, and you're going to see it! And you're going to see it over and over and over again.

And you think the problem is those son-of-a-guns out there! **[Congregation laughs]** *"If those son-of-a-guns out there would just get their act together, I could be at peace."* And the problem is: you're a walking reflection of yourself! And, if you don't like what you see, it takes a special breed of person to be with you. **[Congregation laughs]** Can I get an Amen? **[Congregation: "Amen!"]** Amen! Right?

So, as we do our soul work, we actually express more God. And people are actually attracted to you. Right? Because they feel something. They feel the love. They feel the peace. They feel the joy. They feel God, because you've done your inner work. And you're not holding on to a lot of baggage from years and years and years that you've never let go of. You become the shiny, radiant light of God!

Jesus said, *"Let your light so shine that others may see your good works and give glory to God."* So what are the good works? The good works is that you've healed your soul! The good works is that you're not carrying yesterday's pain into every new moment. You're not carrying yesterday's disappointments. You're not carrying yesterday's anger. You're not carrying that with you, because you're shining bright as an expression of the Divine. Right?

So does that make sense to everybody? That you understand the role of your soul and soul healing. Right? So you have a three-fold nature, and you have soul healing.



Let's go to the next one. And what I want you to see with this one is: at this level, the soul has a pivotal role. And why is it important? Well, the soul has the ability to focus outwardly toward the world, but it also has the ability to pivot and focus on God.

So that's why, in Unity, we talk a lot about prayer and meditation. Right? So there's a need, because -- if the soul is just focusing on the world -- it gets a distorted view of reality. That we, on a regular basis, have to bring ourselves back to God.

Bring ourselves back to the Infinite. Bring ourselves back to love.

To bring ourselves back so that the soul, then, can either shift and focus on the world, or it can shift and focus on God.

And when we focus on God, over and over again -- when that's the dominant vision that we're holding; when that's the focus of our life -- imagine that everything in your life becomes easier to express when you're not focused on all the stuff, all the things that are going on in the world.

And it doesn't mean we don't have to be aware of the things that are going on in the world, but we have to bring ourselves back to the Infinite. We have to bring ourselves back to God on a regular basis.

Because the human part of us can go get so upset about all of "them." And whoever "them" are. And those people: if those people would just be different. And we have to continually bring ourselves back to God. We have to move the focus off the external on to the internal.

Now there's one more point I want to make. The thing that is probably the most exciting aspect of the soul for me is its ability to expand. Your soul has an infinite capacity for expansion.

Now, why is that important? To the degree that you expand your soul is to the degree that you can hold God's goodness. Right?

Sometimes people will come to me and say, *"Richard, I want this help with this project. This project is so much bigger than me."* And my response to them is always, *"Well, you can't create anything in your life that's bigger than your soul, because it won't fit."* Does that make sense?

That if you want to create greater joy, peace, abundance, greater love, your soul actually has to expand so that it ... so that there's room for the Infinite to give birth to that through you. So your soul has a huge capacity to expand. The problem is that most people in our culture, at some time or another, are taught: when they're afraid to get small. There's a culture of belief that says, *"If I get small enough, no one can hurt me ... or they can hurt me less."* And children were taught years ago -- not so much now -- to be seen and not heard. Right? And it's this idea that, if we get small enough, we're safe enough. And it actually is exactly the opposite of what is spiritually true.

In the presence of every situation, if you're trying to get smaller than your fears, you are doomed. If you're trying to get smaller than your anger or your shame or your upset, you're doomed! The way the soul functions at its highest level is through expansion. You actually need to be bigger than goals. You need to be bigger than your desires. Because the bigger your soul is -- the more expanded you allow your soul to become -- the more God, the more good, the more blessings, the more love you can download into your life. Right?

So I want you to think about the last time you were in conflict with someone. When you were in conflict with them, did you go big or did you go small? The last time you felt shame or guilt about something you did, did you go big or did you go small? And what I want you to see is the cultural norm to go small in times of difficulty. And it's actually the exact wrong thing to do.

If there's a moment of shame, if you make a mistake, if you're embarrassed about what you did ... If you go big in that moment where you feel shame, there's room for God. There's room for love. There's room for a healing. But when you make a big mistake, and you go really small, you actually get stuck in the mistake. There's not room for that mistake to kind of be washed out of your system. You actually kind of lock down around it.

So you ready for your homework tonight? I want you to think about the times in your past -- or areas in your life right now -- where you know you're playing small. Maybe at work, in relationship. Where, out of fear, you've marginalized yourself. You've contracted yourself. Right? Could be in conflict. Could be in fear. Could be in guilt. Could be in shame ... where you've contracted yourself.

For you to be the very best version of you, you have to intentionally override the programming of your past and decide you're going to be big. You're going to actually have to practice expanding your energy so that love can wash that out. So love can bless you anyway. So that you can be more prosperous, healthier, more alive than you've ever been before.

What happened during Covid is: so many people contracted. Right? We had a mass contraction. And it makes sense, right? But it's not helpful. Right? So there are so many times where we have a contraction in exactly the moment where we needed an expansion. But unconsciously, we're wired for contraction. We've been taught that, in the presence of fear, get small.

And your homework for this week is: I want you to get big. I want you to intentionally imagine your soul expanding to be bigger than the shame of the past. Bigger than your fears. Bigger than your anger. Bigger than your upset. Bigger than your disappointment. Bigger than your desires. I want you to feel your soul's infinite capacity to download God by being bigger than you've ever been before.

And can everybody think of a time when somebody got after you about: "*Who do you think you are?*" Did everybody hear that at least once in their life? "*Who do you think you are?*" And the idea was: you were being so big that they shamed you for being that big, so you learned to marginalize yourself. You learned to contract yourself, right?

And I want you to see how culturally normal that is: to teach people to contract. Like, we're not even aware of it! But when little kids come into the world, if they are too big, society finds a way to take them down so that they become smaller. We have to change that. We have to change it in ourselves. We have to be willing to be willing than we've ever been before so that we open a space to be more blessed, to be more God-like, to be more abundant, to be more happy, to be more loving, to be more kind, to be more giving.

We actually have to expand. Like, in the moment we're contracted, imagine how generous you are. Not! 'Cause you're contracted! You're just trying to get enough for today! You're just trying to ensure that you and your family are okay!

But the more we expand -- the more we allow ourselves to be a conduit for greater and greater of God's good -- the more generous we become. The happier we become. The more giving we become. The more of everything! The more life works.

So does everybody have one area in your life where you can see tonight that you've contracted way too small? It could be a goal. It could be a desire. It could be in a relationship. It could be a time in your past. But I want you to see an area in your life where you can now see you got too small. Maybe you got scared. Maybe you were shamed by somebody, and you just got small.

Today I want you to open a space. I want you to unleash the fullness of your soul to be bigger than it's ever been before.

Will you take a breath with me? And let's move into a time of prayer.

I want you just to breathe for a moment into the full power and space of your soul. That your soul's capacity to expand is infinite. To hold more love, more joy, more peace, more God than ever before. That you are here for God. You are here to be a conduit for all the good that God is. You are a channel for the Infinite. And today we expand beyond our smallness, beyond our story, beyond our drama, beyond our past. We expand to be more and more of a channel for God's infinite good into the world so that love and light and joy can manifest in all of our lives! Thank you, God, for the nature of my soul! Thank you, God, that my soul has the capacity to express all that you are. In the name and through the power of the Living Christ, we give thanks. And so it is. Amen.

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