

LIVING YOUR FULLY ENGAGED LIFE

Final Week of the 4-Week Series, "The Power of Full Engagement"

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So today we're going to conclude Rev. Richard's series on "The Power of Full Engagement," which is a book. I'm using this book as a reference point.

And for those of you who don't know, Rev. Richard is visiting his brother, who is ill. And so we just send our love and our hearts to Rev. Richard and his entire family. And, again, I'm honored to be able to wrap this series up.

So the premise of this book is that there is one critical thing that we can manage -- that's the word that is used in the book. It's not our time; it's not our money. But it is, in fact, our energy. When we properly manage our energy, we have an aliveness. We can be fully engaged in life.

And the last few Sundays, Rev. Richard has given us beautiful messages on managing your physical energy, your emotional energy, your mental energy. If you weren't here to hear those -- or even if you were, and you've forgotten them ... because I know, you know, it's been a long time since last week **[congregation laughs]** --- go back online and listen to them. Because they're really profound, and there are some delicious practical wisdoms in them.

Today we're going to wrap this series up by the most important of the energies: the energy that fires, that fuels, all the other ones. It's the energy behind our physical energy, the energy behind our mental energy. It's the energy behind our emotional energy. So what is that energy? **[Congregation shouts out answers]** Oh, look; they answered already! I didn't even have to ask you! **[Congregation laughs]** I love it! Yes, so say that out loud again, big! **[Congregation: "Spiritual energy!"]** It is our spiritual energy! It is our connection; it is our connection to something greater -- vastly greater -- than we are. Infinitely greater than we are and, yet, lives in us, as us and through us.

And without that connection ... Without a deliberate union with the Source of all energy ... Without the absolute recognition that Universal energy is my energy ... And without cultivating the Divine presence, we cannot live a fully engaged life.

We may go through the motions of living a fully engaged life [laughs]. We may look good on the outside. People may think, "Oh, that person's engaged!" We may have some semblance of success. But at the end of the day, if we are not connecting with our spiritual energy, we will wind up like the title of the song that Peggy ... Okay, here's a trivia question. Peggy Lee wrote in 1969 -- you'll date yourself if you know the name of this song. What is it? **[Congregation shouts out answers]** "Is That All There Is?" Is that all there is?

Now, I have another trivia piece for you. Do you know that Peggy Lee wrote that song after having gotten great commercial success. She was a very successful singer. She walked into a New Thought church. A New Thought church! She learned spiritual principles; she started to live spiritual principles. And then she wrote that song about the life that she knew -- the only life she knew before she recognized the power and importance of connecting with her spiritual energy.

Quoting from this month's source book, *"Fundamentally, spiritual energy is a unique force for action in all -- not a few -- in all dimensions of life. It is the most powerful source of our motivation, perseverance and direction."*

So I suspect I'm "preaching to the choir" this morning, because we know this, don't we? We know this! We know that our spiritual energy is the most important thing. **[Sighs heavily; congregation laughs]** But my question is: do we really? Do we really know that?

And one of the things that I think is my job to do is to have you squirm in your seats a little bit. A matter of fact, the job of a minister ... I don't know if you know the job of a minister. There's just one. It's in

every minister's job description. It is to comfort the afflicted and afflict the comfortable. **[Congregation laughs and applauds]** So I'm going to afflict you a little bit this morning!

But I hope not as much as the preacher afflicted the little old lady in a country church when he was preaching against sin. And every time he preached against a sin, she would say, "Yes, brother; Hallelujah! Amen." So he's preaching against the sin of drinking and carousing, and she said, "Yes, brother; Hallelujah! Amen." Then he was preaching the sin of cheating and lying. "Praise God; praise Jesus! Amen." Then he starts railing -- absolutely railing -- against the sin of thieving and stealing. "Amen; amen; amen!" Then he went on a rant about the sin of pipe smoking. **[Congregation laughs]** Well, she happened to be a pipe smoker herself. And so, at that point, she said, "Oh, oh, oh; no, no, no! Now he has stopped preaching and he has starting meddling!" **[Congregation laughs]** Do I may meddle a little bit this morning. And that's okay!

So my meddling question is: When we dig down into the deepest parts of us ... When we are willing to take a look at the dark and scary places: a place we don't want to go ... Or when life gets difficult: tragedy strikes ... Do we really have a deep and profound, sweet and consistent connection with the Divine presence? With the Source of all? With Universal energy? Can we feel it take ahold of us and uplift us and empower us and support us when times get tough?

This is critical, and it's a critical question to ask this morning. The answer has to be, "Yes" if we want to live a fully engaged life.

So I'm going to dive into this question in two ways this morning. The first way is: I want to share and then unpack a quote. It is a quote from my spiritual lineage, which is Science of Mind. And it's a quote by the founder of Science of Mind, Dr. Ernest Holmes. And those of you who have read Ernest Holmes will know that Dr. Holmes could be a tiny bit wordy! **[Congregation laughs]** Just a tiny bit wordy! So this is a tiny bit wordy quote. Okay; that's another way of saying "It's long." It's long. But it's amazing; it's amazing! So I'm going to share that and unpack it.

And then the other way I want us to come into this to make it real ... I like ... It's important for me to make this time together real ... And I'm going to share with you a personal journey that I have traveled not all that long ago.

So the quote is our first thing. So because it's long, I want you to stay awake. **[Congregation laughs]** Alright? So to help you do that, I want you to turn to a neighbor and say, "Stay with her!" Go ahead: "Stay with her." **[Congregation repeats to one another]** And then I want you to say, "I've got my eyes on you; I'm watching!" **[Congregation laughs and repeats to one another]** And then, finally, "She's got her eyes on you; she's watching!" **[Congregation laughs and repeats to one another]** I can see you all the way back there, and all the way back there! Alright; so here it is.

I had somebody in the first service tell me that this first section could be in the headlines of the newspapers today.

"The world is crying out for God. Lost in the canyons of disillusionment, where the trail runs out and stops against granite barriers that wall us in, we cry, 'Why hast Thou forsaken me?'"

When war devastates the land and, trembling, we stand at the mouth of hell, listening to the screaming of planes, the wails of the wounded, and the terror of the headlines, we cry, 'O, God, why hast Thou forsaken me?'"

But the answer to our need lies not in God's willingness, but in our will to accept -- in our ability, through faith, to recognize -- the Divine presence as the great reality of life.

What is the longing of your heart? The one who is ill wishes to recover. An impoverished person wishes to become enriched. To the one who is unhappy, happiness is heaven. To the lonely, love and friendship are of utmost importance.

Upon a closer examination, however, there is one central, but perhaps unconscious, and unuttered thought running through all of these desires. Our highest satisfaction comes from a sense of conscious union with the invisible life, and in the realization that such a Power is available."

[Breathes deeply] Take that in! Take that ... I'm not done reading, by the way ... **[Congregation laughs]** But **[laughs]** pause to take that in!

And I want to change one word. I want to change two words, actually ... No one word: satisfaction. I want to take "satisfaction" out of that statement and put in our theme for the day, and read it like this:

"Our highest degree of engagement in life comes from a sense of conscious union with the invisible life, and in the realization that such a Power is available."

You still with me? Okay. Let me go on:

"The Divine Spirit is not a mythical abstract Being living somewhere above this earth. God is a Divine presence revealing Itself to everyone who believes. Where God is recognized, there is life. Where the presence of God is realized, there is action. Where the goodness of God is acknowledged, there is peace."

Have we really tried God? Since all other methods have failed, the Divine compulsion is laid upon everyone to find the power of God and make use of it. The cry, 'My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?' rising from countless and millions of anguished minds as they hang from the cross of human suffering will not go unanswered if faith in the Divine presence is gained."

[Heavy breath; repeats the quote] *"The cry, 'My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?' will not go unanswered if faith in the Divine presence is gained."* That, my friends, is the key to living a fully engaged life. Having faith in the Divine presence: the Divine presence that is bigger than me, that is bigger than you ... and yet lives in you and as you and through you.

The Master Teacher, Jesus: this is what he taught us. This is what he showed us. This is how he lived. He actively cultivated that Divine presence within him. He did it as a little boy. You all may remember the story where his parents had lost him. They didn't know where he was; they were probably panicked. And then they found him; probably gave him a few choice words. Those are not in the Bible **[congregation laughs]**, but they probably gave him a few choice words. And then he said to them, "Why were you looking for me? Didn't you know that I was about my Father's business?"

What was he doing? He was in the temple speaking to the religious leaders of the day. He cultivated the Divine presence through thought and contemplation and conversation.

We also know that he had moments of fear and doubt like we all have. Especially his in the Garden of Gethsemane. And yet, he conquered that fear and doubt by turning to the Divine presence through prayer and meditation.

And he told us: in order to do the things he did, all we had to do was open our eyes and our ears and our minds to see and hear and know that the kingdom of God is ... where? **[Congregation shouts out answers]** Within! A different version -- a different translation -- of Scripture says "at hand." Same thing!

The kingdom of God / the Divine presence / Universal energy is here, at hand, within. In other words, he nurtured and he cultivated that deep and abiding relationship with the God of his being. And he had faith in the Divine presence.

So how we are doing actively cultivating it? You know, it's easy **[chuckles]** ... It's easy to say, "Oh, yeah, yeah; I'm connected. I'm good. God and I are good." **[Congregation laughs]** It's easy to say that when things are going great: when life is clicking; when we are manifesting; everything we want is happening. "Yeah, I got this down! Um hmmm!"

And then something in life happens: something in life that might take us to our knees. This is where we get to find out -- not in any kind of guilt or shame: *"Oh, my gosh, I'm not spiritual enough!"* No! But just to be aware that there is more cultivation to do. That's all. There is simply more cultivation to do.

In our resource book, the authors wrote, *"It is often around tragedy that people discover the importance of spiritual energy."*

[Repeats:] It is often around tragedy that people discover the importance of spiritual energy. So I'm going to share a personal story with you. And it is one that I have not shared out loud but to a small, small group of people. Now, it's interesting, because I did write it in a book. **[Laughs with congregation]** I did write it in my book ... which, by the way, is in your bookstore should you want to go buy it! **[Congregation laughs]** Had to get that little plug in! But writing it in a book and standing in front of you this morning and talking about it are two very different things. Because you're going to sit in your living room and read that book; I'm not right there.

But, as I was preparing for today and thinking it about it all week, telling you this personal piece about me was ... it was not an option. It was like, *"You will tell that."* *"No, I won't."* *"Yes, you will!"* *"No, I won't!"* *"Yes, you will."* **[Congregation laughs]** Every had that argument with your intuition?

So I'm going to tell you a story: my personal story of getting a chance to nurture and cultivate my relationship with the Divine presence. And I had what we call a dark night of the soul. A deep and dark night of the soul. And those of you who know me know what it is about, of course: it was when I lost my beloved husband of almost 30 years. He passed away three-and-a-half years ago.

And it took me over a year to even look at what I'm about to tell you. I didn't even look at it. I was busy grieving. I was busy trying to put my life back together. I was busy changing my ... the way I gave my gifts and shared my life force. I stepped down from my church of 22 years, and was rebuilding who I was professionally.

So it was over a year that I let myself even recognize that I felt ... I'm not sure I can have words strong enough, but I will use the words bereft, devastated and disillusioned at what I had believed at the core of my being for over 30 years -- and taught **[voice catches]** to many of you sitting out there for 22 years. And I felt it failed me. Didn't fail me ... well, it did fail me. It failed my husband, as well.

Because, you see, Lonnie did everything he knew to do spiritually to stay here physically. He prayed, meditated. He went to Brazil to see the healer, John of God, when I didn't know that he would make that. Because he had a hard time ... He had a bad heart. He had a hard time walking from the car to the grocery store entrance without becoming exhausted. But he did that! He visualized his heart pumping vibrantly and healthy. He went to therapists and healers to help clear away whatever blocks might be standing in the way. He was in the middle of prayer circles. He was on prayer lists. In other words, everything that could be done spiritually, he did. And the bottom line is: he still died. He left this earth. That shook me to my core.

And I never said this to any of my community. I'll tell you now that, yes; I stepped down from my ministry, because it was time. It was time. Because I didn't want to do it without him. That's true. Those were true. But the other reason was: I couldn't ... **[voice catches]** I couldn't stand up on a stage and say things I wasn't sure I believed any more. So that was the big reason I stepped down.

And I didn't ... Since I didn't have to go to church anymore, I could just not think about it. I put it away. Anybody ever have something you didn't want to deal with? So I'm like, *"I'm just going to put it over here."* And I did that for a long time. And I tiptoed into church now and again; I followed my favorite singers around. **[Laughs]** But I ... Yeah.

And then a time came; my soul said, *"Okay, girl; you've got to deal with this. Your spiritual connection is too important to you. You can't let it ... You can't just let it die. You have to ... You have to do something about this."*

And so, I said, "Okay; it's time." My soul knew when it was time. And I knew that I could not do it by myself. I could not walk that journey alone. And so I reached out to colleagues: people who had served as friends and mentors of me. I reached out to beloved Richard Rogers, whose been a friend of mine for decades. I reached out to other spiritual teachers and leaders. And between them and among them, we cried together. We talked. They shared their views; I shared my heart. We prayed.

And slowly, but surely, I started to put some pieces together for me. I started to see some things differently. I started to deepen the relationship I had with the Divine before I went away. Because God didn't go anywhere; I went somewhere. I began to deepen my belief.

And I'm not going to go into all the details of that. **[Whispers]:** You can read it in my book! **[Laughs with congregation]** But what will tell you is I came to a place where I could -- in my heart and in my mind and in the fullness of my being -- I could reconcile the fact that everything was done in the human experience that we could do to keep Lonnie alive. And he died anyway because it was his time to go. It was his soul's journey to be gone.

I came to an ability to reconcile that with -- and at the same time -- my deep belief that we are creative beings, and we create our experiences through the Law of Attraction, or whatever Law you want to call it. It's all the same Law, right? That we absolutely can create in our life. And I've done ... People tell me: "You're a really powerful manifester." I am! I mean, I think of it, and it's done! I had to put those two together. Because, for me, they didn't work together. So I had to come and bring those two together. And I would not be standing up here talking to you this morning -- I couldn't be; I wouldn't be -- if I had not been able to do that.

So I have done that, and I've gone to a deeper place in my spirituality. I've gone to a deeper connection with the Source of my being. And I can now stand and proudly -- I think that's one of the seven deadly sins, but I'm going to say it anyway! **[Congregation laughs]** I can stand here proudly and say that I went through that dark night of the soul, and I have come out on the other side.

And if any of you have gone or are going through such a thing, you, too, can come out on the other side. And my prayer is that you allow it to deepen your connection. To strengthen your spiritual muscle. To manage, at a deeper and more profound level, your spiritual energy, so that you might be fully -- fully! -- engaged in life.

I'm a big believer in affirmations. So, in just a moment, we're going to say some affirmations. But before I do, I have one more quick thing I want to say to you, as a spiritual community.

When I did decide to dip my toe back into going to church, and started waking up again, I started coming here. Now, I have to confess: it's because it's the closest New Thought church to where I live, and I'm a little bit of a girl of convenience. **[Congregation laughs]** I've just got to be honest about that! But none the less ... **[Laughs]** I loved what I heard here. I was touched by the incredible music that is always here. And I started feeling like, "This is home." And I feel like that.

And so I want to thank you for bringing the energy that you bring. I thank Rev. Richard for what he brings. Rev. Lori. The other Rev. Richard. Now Rev. Jimmie ... for everything that is done here that makes this such a beautiful spiritual community that I now call my home. So I'm excited about that!

[Congregation applauds]

So stand up! I think it's important that, when we proclaim some things, that we proclaim it, not just in our minds and our mouths, but with our bodies. So if you want to put your hands to your heart; you want to put your hands up. Whatever you want to do. Let us say together -- it's on the screen.

[With congregation]: "In this moment ... I consciously connect with that which is greater than me, but that lives as me."

Take a deep breath; breathe that in. Let's do this one; there's another one.

[With congregation]: "In this moment ... I deliberately unite with the Source of all energy."

Breathe that one in. Say, "Yes!" Say, "Amen." Say, "Yes!" Here we go:

[With congregation]: In this moment ... I recognize that Universal energy is my energy."

Breath! Deep breath.

[With congregation]: In this moment ... I cultivate the Divine presence."

And one more:

[With congregation]: "And in this moment ... I am fully engaged in life." Let me hear that one again!
Let's go! "In this moment, I am fully engaged in life."

And so it is. And so we let it be. God bless! Amen. ***[Congregation applauds]***

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