

HEAL ME

Week #2 of the 7-Week Lenten/Easter Series, "Space for Grace"

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I just wanted to give a shout out to Unity Grand Valley in Grand Junction, Colorado, who uses some of our Sunday talks as their Sunday talk. Could we get a round of applause and some love for them?

[Congregation whoops and applauds] Welcome, guys!

So this married man leaves work early on Friday, takes his paycheck and parties with his buddy all weekend instead of going home. And then finally when he returns home on Sunday night, he is greeted by an earful of upset and anger from his wife. *"Why didn't you come home? Why did you disappear for three days? Why didn't you even call? I was worried sick about you!"* And she just kept going on and on for about an hour with complaints and upset.

And then finally she said, *"How would you like it if you didn't see me for a few days?"* And he said, *"Whoa ... well, that would suit me just fine!"* [Congregation laughs]

So Monday went by and the man didn't see his wife. Tuesday went by and he didn't see her. Wednesday went by the same; he did not see her. But on Thursday, the swelling could go down enough that he could see her just from the corner of his left eye. [Congregation laughs] Whew! [Laughs] Alright!

So when I was in seminary, we would have these guest ministers. These experienced ministers would come and share a lot of their wisdom and insight. And one of them was Rev. James Dillet Freeman. He was not only a minister; he was actually the director for 20 years of the seminary. He was also the director of Silent Unity, the prayer line. He wrote a number of books, number of poems. His most famous thing in 1949: he wrote "The Prayer of Protection" that we do every Sunday.

Interestingly, in 1969 Buzz Aldrin, the astronaut, took a copy of "The Prayer of Protection" up on Apollo 11: on their moon walk. And then in 1971, James Erwin, another astronaut, in Apollo 15 took a different poem called "I Am There," and actually left a microfilm of one of his poems called "I Am There."

So he was a bit of a Unity legend! He was 85 years old. So he gave a lecture, and he was answering some questions. And somebody asked this question: *"What is the biggest and most significant thing that you have learned from all your years of spiritual study?"*

And here's what he said: *"I have learned that everyone in this life is hurting in some way. Every one of us is here to heal something. And our healing is an important part of our spiritual journey."*

So I have to say, I was surprised that he didn't say something a little more positive, uplifting and inspiring. Like, the Living Spirit of God dwells in you. Or God loves you. God has a plan and a purpose for your life. Or through your faith in God, all things are possible. Or if you believe, Jesus said, *"You shall do the things that I've done and even greater things than these."* I could think of a ton of things I thought he would say. And so I was surprised that he said that everyone is hurting, and that healing is an important part of our journey.

And I think he didn't say one of those positive, uplifting things is because he knew we already knew those things. That we focused on those things. But I think the reason he said it was because we don't like hearing hard stuff. We don't like hearing the difficult stuff; the messy stuff. And then the second part of that is that he wanted to remind us that that healing we all have to do is an important part of our spiritual life.

Sometimes in our desire to live a better life -- a more positive life, a more spiritual life -- we can sometimes sweep under the rug and think it's not important some of this stuff that we go through internally. Some of our pain and our wounds, and some of the places that we don't want to go to. Sometimes we overlook it, because we don't want to deal with it. We don't want to feel it. We don't want to go through that process.

He gave an interesting interpretation -- a fabulous one! -- of the Parable of the Lost Sheep. It says if a man owns 100 sheep, and one wanders away, does he not leave the 99 on the hill to find the one that is lost? And when he finds it, he puts it on his shoulders and rejoices. God loves even the lost!

And so his interpretation was that the number 100 in the Bible symbolically means wholeness. It represents a full life. It represents an abundant, prosperous life, and the fullness of God in our lives. And that, even when we need the 99 blessings of all the good things that are going well, that sometimes in our lives there's one part of us that feels lost. A part that feels wounded or rejected or abandoned or ashamed or unworthy.

He said that a part of our work in our spiritual life is to go after that and do our healing work to bring that part of us that feels lost or hopeless or wounded back in so that we can feel that sense of wholeness and connection, and that fullness of our relationship with God, and that fullness of life.

So I ask you: Where in your life do you have some part of you that feels lost? That feels wounded or abandoned? What part of your life would you say needs to be healed? And needs to heal up?

We're in the second of our six-week Lenten series called "Space for Grace." Lent is that 40-day period before the miraculous resurrection on Easter. The number 40 Biblically symbolizes a period of discipline, devotion and preparation. As Moses or Elijah and Jesus; that time -- 40 days of preparation, of prayer and fasting -- prepared them to bring forth something great and miraculous through themselves and into our world.

And Lent really invites us to do our inner preparation, discipline and devotion, and to prepare ourselves spiritually to create a space for more of God's grace to work something great through us.

Last week we talked about "Use Me": to create a space for more prayer time, contemplation and reflection with God, and to set an intention to say, *"Here I am, God; use me! Let my life be served for you and through you to bless others."* And, finally, to live in the grace of knowing that we're supported in all that we do.

And today we're going to look at the idea of healing: that healing journey within us. Because I believe everyone's here in this life that there are gifts we're meant to express. There's love we are meant to share. There are things we are meant to learn. Things we are meant to discover. Things we are meant to contribute. And a difference we're here to make. And, as a part of that spiritual journey, there's things that we are here to heal.

And so we're going to look at the second step in "Space for Grace," which is **HEAL ME**.

And so the healing journey really begins, as Eckhart Tolle says, with a level of awareness and honesty about what's really going on within ourselves. Because often, we don't always know what's going on in ourselves. We're not always honest about what we're feeling or where we're hurting and what we desire in our lives. We often will just say, *"No; all's good! All's good!"* when it's not. We'll say it because we don't want to come across as weak. And so I think it takes practice for us to be more honest with ourselves. Practice to develop greater levels of self-awareness.

One of the ways we do that is to actually ask ourselves questions. So in what area of my life am I hurting? What in me needs to be healed? Where in my life do I feel lost or betrayed or abandoned or rejected? Where in my life do I find myself constantly struggling? Where in my life do I feel stuck? Or what do I feel is really holding me back from living as fully and joyously a life as I want? Where do I keep repeating negative patterns? You know, dating the same person or having the same argument, having the same financial struggles and levels of dissatisfaction?

Eckhart Tolle says that every one of us has what he calls a "pain body." Those are hurts and disappointments that we've had in our lives that we've not resolved. That we've ignored, denied, pretended, swept under the rug. And they still are in us as an energy: as negative pain and hurt in ourselves. And he says whether we realize it or not, that energy is impacting our peace and our

happiness, and it actually undermines -- and sometimes sabotages -- our success, our happiness and our relationships.

We'd rather make it look good on the outside sometimes than really go deep and see what's really going on. But the fact is: our souls want to be liberated and have full expression. And it wants to be released from some of those negative energies that haven't healed. And a key and the first step to it is awareness. We must be willing to be aware.

In my first several years in ministry doing counseling, I noticed that people who were 50, 60, 70, 80 would come in. And they would talk for a moment about what's going on now, but it always went back to something that happened a long time ago that didn't address, that they didn't face, they didn't deal with. But now -- after all the kids and all the things -- they were finally ready to take time to heal. They were finally ready to face and do the inner work. Because it hit a level where something was missing, and it wasn't going to be replaced by success or money or achievements; it had to be soul work. It had to be healing work.

What's that line that says, *"You can run, but you can't hide?"* I mean, if it is a part of our path and our life, it's going to be there, and we need to make a commitment: Am I willing to take time to heal? Am I willing to be honest with myself by being more aware of what's really going on? Whether it's from family dysfunction or unhealthy boundaries -- whatever the pattern might be! -- the question is: Are we willing to be more aware and more honest and face it?

Sugar Ray Leonard, the great boxer: it wasn't until he was in his 50s that he was even willing to admit to himself that he had experienced sexual abuse, and what a detrimental impact he had on his life.

You know, I think we have a hard time admitting to ourselves and being honest and letting ourselves be self-aware.

Sometimes we think that being hurt seems like we're weak, or we're failures. Sometimes we think vulnerability or being authentic and real is scary or embarrassing or not strong. Sometimes we think needing help or admitting we need help shows some sign that we're not successful, or we're not great. Actually, that desire to be honest and step on that healing path is a powerful, powerful, wonderful and important step for us to make.

One of the ways that I think is very healthy to at least get the start of awareness is by journaling. I'm not a journaling guy; I don't really like it. But I do journal when things aren't going so good. And I find that writing down the things that I'm feeling -- where I feel stuck -- really shows me what's going on. And when you do it long enough, it shows patterns. Writing some of the few things I thought, "Huh. Didn't I write this same thing about somebody else two months ago?" You end up seeing your own patterns and your own stuff.

What happens with our painful feelings, we either do one of two things. We either bury it and deny it and hide it that way. Or we create a story about what victims we are. Either way, journaling helps us find out what's really going on. To see what's actually written there actually helps us a lot. And helps us have a more realistic and healthy version of what's happening with us. And we become less afraid, less overwhelmed. Because the stories in our head are far more frightening! And when you write it down, you actually see what's going on, and you're less overwhelmed or intimidated or controlled by it.

Another important thing is to see a therapist or talk to a friend or do a workshop or enter a program. Whatever it takes! With a willingness to be aware of what's really going on with us is a huge step to liberating ourselves and getting a level of healing.

And so one thing is just to begin noticing where you feel hurt and what triggers you, and what that pain feels like. pay attention and notice to the story that you tell yourself. Like maybe, "Life is unfair" or whatever it is. Just observe. You don't even have to try to force a change anything; just be honest and begin to observe, and things will begin to shift. Because the more we deny, the more we stuff, the more we bury, things come out sideways. It will impact and undermine us subconsciously, and sabotage our

happiness. The more honest we are, the more aware we are, it begins to help us be aware. It begins to free us of the grip of the control of that, and we're more likely to change, transform and be healed.

Self-awareness is not easy! But it is an important thing if we want to go deeper. To have a greater level of spiritual awareness and connection and happiness and fulfillment, we need to start being aware. Because it will lead us to wholeness and it really will create more space for God's grace.

The second we need to do is to do a regular healing practice. Dr. David Hawkins says that there is one practice that scientific research shows is the most effective technique when it comes to reducing stress, of creating a greater sense of inner peace, and relieving suffering; to help our physical and our mental well-being; to increase the level of love in our lives and our spiritual connection.

But we don't like this practice! We don't like to do it! We'd rather do anything else! We'd rather turn to philosophy, astrology, psychology, reflexology, kinesiology, iridology, visualization, mediation, meditation, affirmations, astral projection, hormone injections ... [Congregation laughs] We'd rather drink green tea, Learn NLP, electrolyze, jazzercise, colonics, aerobics, balance our chakras, cleanse our auras, study Zen, become a vegetarian, try macrobiotic, go totally organic, do hot massage to a sweat lodge. We even try tantric sex and then we wonder what's next. [Congregation whoops, laughs and applauds] And so, um ...

We so dislike this technique we'd rather try anything but! Anybody know what this is? What technique it is? Absolutely healing and transforming? [Congregants shout out answers] Those are all great, but here's the one: it is letting go.

Here's what he says: If you want to achieve spiritual mastery and a greater and closer relationship with God, you need to learn to let go and surrender your life to God. Surrender to the universe. Surrender to your Higher Power. Surrender it all; freely release it to God.

In the same way that being aware is hard, letting go is hard. Letting go scares us; we feel like, *"Oh, if I let go, what will happen? Will I fall apart? Will everything be okay?"* When we let go, it's almost like, *"Then I got no excuses!"* Sometimes letting go is scary! We think holding on is safer but, yet, it's the opposite. Holding on can sometimes keep us stuck and trapped. And letting go is really the path to freedom.

Notice awareness is hard, but it's liberating and leads to healing. Letting go is hard, but it is freeing and liberating, and it leads us to healing. Our "pain body" that's in us, by the Law of Attraction, tends to attract more pain if we aren't willing to deal with it; if we just keep it stuffed.

He said something really, really interesting that I liked. He said, you know, we always think it's our thinking -- our negative thinking -- that attracts all the harm and pain in our lives. But he says it's not just our negative thinking. He said what it is: it is the emotions and feelings we attach to our thinking. That the emotion that we attach to our thinking has a stronger attracting power than just the thought alone. And our emotions are so powerful and important that, if we release the emotion, that the thoughts will begin to dissolve.

That, if we connect and actually allow and surrender the emotions to God, that there will be a greater healing in our thinking and, therefore, then in our emotion, as well. If we think things like, *"Life is unfair,"* you go to the emotion that gets triggered, and you willingly let go of the emotion. And then that thought begins to fade away.

So what he says is: when you get triggered, what you need to do is don't attack it or blame yourself. He says just love yourself right where you are. Allow yourself to feel that feeling -- whether it's shame, or whatever it is -- and then allow yourself to give it to God. And do a simple little prayer: *"God, heal what needs to be healed in me. And create a clean heart in me, O Lord."*

He said it's as simple as that, but you have to focus on the emotion. Let go of the emotion. Because if we desire a better life, we need to do a healing practice daily and regularly. And it needs to be that healing practice of letting go, particularly focusing on the emotion of the things that trigger you. Release it and

give it to God. Surrender it all to God! And God will bring the healing. Things will begin to open up and lighten up in our lives. It's got to be done consistently and regularly.

Somebody said, *"If you ain't changing, you're choosing."* What's that other line? *"If you always do what you've always done, you always get what you always got."* [Congregation laughs] And so the question is -- if you really want to heal; if you want to create more space for God's grace; if you want a spiritual breakthrough -- that our own inner healing needs to be an important aspect of that process. And we need to be doing this particular practice. It's a powerful practice of releasing and letting go and surrendering the emotional pain and hurt to God, and then things will begin to unfold in great and wonderful ways.

Healing is about acknowledging the hurt, being honest about it, and being willing to release the emotional pain to God.

And the final one is that we need to what I would call embrace the tapestry of life. In 1976 Steve Wonder won a bunch of Grammy Awards for an album called *Songs in the Key of Life*. Does anybody remember that album? [Congregation murmurs] And he gave an acceptance speech; I was like 9 years old or something. And it just rocked me; I was so inspired, the hairs on the back of my neck stood up!

And so here's what he said: *"I want to give thanks for all the people who have loved me, supported me, and believed in me and encouraged for me. I'd like to give thanks, also, for all the things that went well; all the good breaks and opportunities that I had. But I'd also like to give thanks to all the people who didn't believe in me, who discouraged me, who didn't think I would succeed. And for all of the things that didn't go my way, and for all the breaks I didn't get. Because, together, they all have made me who I am today."*

I thought that was one of the most amazing things I'd ever heard at 9 years old. Because what he's saying is: embrace it all. Everything in your life is there for you: to help you heal, and to know that you are whole, complete and lacking in nothing. That life is a tapestry of highs and lows; and love and heartbreaks; successes and failures. It's a whole tapestry of all things; all of those experiences are what make us what we are today. All those experiences are what makes life richer; life more meaningful; life more fulfilling. Everything in your life is there to teach you, to guide you, to uplift you.

Think of something in your life that isn't going so great -- an area you feel wounded or hurt or disappointed or struggling with. And I would guarantee that that particular thing is there in your life to help you to heal.

Listen to the words in the Book of James, when he says, *"Count it all joy, brethren, when you face trials of any kind, for you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance; and let perseverance finish its work in you so that you may know that you are whole and complete and lacking in nothing."*

And so what it is saying is that those challenging experiences and those areas where we feel wounded and hurt are there to help us heal and know that we are whole, complete and lacking in nothing.

It's important for us to accept the gift and the lesson and the blessing for everything in our lives. To help us become better and not bitter.

I know somebody who's got a very, very good life: you know, successful PhD, rich, travels. All kinds of stuff. And then they hit a wall and triggered a devastating amount of pain. And their initial reaction was a little more travel, a little more friends, a little more this and add a little more of that. And it wasn't working. And I love that this person was willing to realize that there was something it was time to heal. Something deep in their life they weren't willing to address or face. And over the next several years was willing to do that work individually; with a counselor; through therapeutic programs. And I would say, today, that this person today feels more at peace with themselves; feels greater levels of worthiness and self-confidence. There's more honest and intimacy in this person's relationship. She truly has had a breakthrough, and the breakthrough wasn't changing anything on the outside. It was changing something inside. It was being willing to do that inner work. Willing to take time to heal.

You know, it's easy for us to think, *"Oh, this little hurt thing is not a big deal. I can just move on with my life."* I like to think of it like going for a walk and you've got a pebble in your shoe. And, you know, like it's bugging you ... but it's really not excruciating. It's not that bad. You know, you're busy; you don't have time; you have places to go and people to see. You don't have time to bend down, take down your shoe, roll the thing out, put it back on. People might look at you and think, *"What's the matter with that person? What's wrong with them? Why are they stopping on their journey?"*

But here's the issue: over time, that rock will cause a blister. And there's going to be some pain. Eventually it will affect how far you move forward and how far you go. And that's why it's important for us to do that healing work now.

James Dillet Freeman said that every single one of us is hurting in some way, and it's a part of our spiritual journey -- part of knowing the fullness of God and living the life we came to live. Doing our healing work is a vital and important part. NCAA -- stuff's going on. There's a wonderful quote that says, *"Everybody wants to win, but not everyone is willing to do the work and prepare for success."* Everybody wants a breakthrough. The question is: Are you willing to do the spiritual inner work that's needed for you to have the breakthrough you are looking for in your life?

Are you willing to be more aware and honest about what feelings and what hurts are going on inside of you? Are you willing to do your healing work by practicing letting go of your emotional pain every day and every moment it comes up? And are you willing to embrace the tapestry of life? All the highs and lows and ups and downs, and use it as a part of your healing journey?

If you want to go deeper, have breakthroughs, you've got to create some space for God's grace. And the second step for that is to say, *"God, heal me!"*

God bless you all! [Congregation applauds]

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