

THE WORD

Week #3 of the 8-Week Series, "The Game"

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Okay; you ready for tonight? So, if you want to change your life -- if you want to move to a greater life than you've ever led before -- do you think it's more important that you change your beliefs or you make a bigger commitment?

Like, if you were raised in a family, and you lived in poverty, and you could see that not everyone lived in poverty, do you think it's more important that you commit to living an abundant life or to believe an abundant life is possible? How many of you want to vote that it's more important that you change your beliefs? How many want to vote for beliefs? Right? How many of you want to vote for commitment?

Tonight I'm going to make a case for what I believe is more important. I believe that, for many of us, the way that we change our beliefs in the quickest, most powerful way is to make a commitment in something that's more than you believe in. Because, in making a commitment that something that is more than you believe in, it actually transforms your beliefs faster than anything else.

And that, over and over again, each one of us has known a life with certain levels of limitations. No matter what they were, we've all known a life of limitations in one way or another. Because none of us have experienced all the good that God has for us. And we can continue to live within those limitations, because we believe those limitations. We believe because we've known it. But there's something that happens when you just make a commitment to go outside of what you know ... to go to a life that's bigger than you know: more loving; more joyous; more alive. Whatever it is!

The moment you make a commitment to go in that direction, it actually calls forth a different kind of faith. Because it calls forth a level of faith where, intellectually, you don't know how to do it. It requires to say, *"Yes! I am willing to live that great of a life, and even though I don't know how to do it, I'm fully committed to it anyway."* It calls forth its own level of faith when you're willing to be that much on the hook for something you don't completely understand.

And for most of us, the way that we do life is that, once we understand how to live a better life, we have a better life. For most of us, we mentally need to get our arms around something before we'll allow ourselves to live it.

And what I want you to hear me say today is: there's an express train that doesn't require that every step along the way you believe in more. It says: If you make a commitment to something that's radically greater than you've ever known before, your beliefs will be transformed as you make that commitment, because that commitment God takes very seriously. The Universe takes very seriously!

And as you make a commitment to live a greater life -- to live in greater health or joy or peace or abundance, any of the qualities of God ... If you make a commitment to say, *"I'm going to live a life of abundance, and even though I don't know how to live a life of abundance, I am fully committed to that."* Or, *"I'm going to be in a loving relationship. And I may never have had a loving relationship; I may have, like, argued and fought, and it's been hard and painful."* And the moment you make that commitment -- that *"I'm committed to having a loving relationship"* -- the Universe begins to work on your behalf.

And tonight I'm going to invite you to call forth that level of faith that allows you to make a commitment, even though your intellect does not know how to get you there. Because if we have to wait until your intellect understands it, sometimes that takes a while! You know, we have to go through trial and effort; we have to make little changes over time and see little improvements; we take baby steps and baby steps.

And there's nothing wrong with baby steps, because life is infinite! Life is eternal! I mean, God's not going anywhere! God's got all kinds of time for you! God's old, but God's not that old, right? [Congregation laughs] And so, when you have to do it in little steps, there's nothing wrong with that. But it's not the express train.

Anybody ever been to New York City and got on the wrong train? [Congregation murmurs] And had to stop every 15 feet? And you're trying to get downtown, and you have at every station. And you can be an old man before you get across town! [Congregation laughs] Right? And there's nothing wrong with that! It's just not as efficient as getting on the express train!

"I want to get on the express train!"

Will you say that with me? [With congregation]: *"I want to get on the express train!"*

And the express train is a commitment than you've ever lived before: to greater health or happiness or joy or abundance. It's making a commitment with the possibility that it won't happen. But your commitment to it, over and over, activates that level of faith.

How many of you watched the Kentucky Derby last week? Anybody watch the Kentucky Derby last week? Anybody know who won the Kentucky Derby? Nobody? Rich Strike, right? Rich Strike won the Kentucky Derby.

So Rick Strike [laughs] last year was a two-year-old colt. Finished dead last in its first race. It was so disappointing to its owner that its owner placed it in a claims race. And a claims race is where it runs the race, and anybody who's willing to claim the fee attached to that race, actually owns the horse.

So last year Rich Strike ran in this claims race. And this gentleman bought him for \$30,000. So his return on investment [laughs] is very good right now! Right? [Congregation laughs]

So he ran in this claims race. Older gentleman purchased him. And he actually went to the claims race to buy another horse. And he didn't get the other horse. And he looked around and said, "What other horse can I buy?" For \$30,000 you can get Rick Strike, so he bought him.

So the very next race that Rich Strike ran, he won by 17 lengths. And the new owner was excited, right? [Congregation murmurs] But then the next race, he finished third, then fourth. Then he had a couple of fifth place finishes. But he was still confident, but his faith was beginning waver a little bit.

And then this year, 2022, Rich Strike became a three-year-old. And all the major races -- all the major thoroughbred races -- you have to be a three-year-old. Right? So the day before the Kentucky Derby, the field was set. It was full. And at the last moment, one of the famous trainers scratched his horse. So this gentleman entered Rich Strike, and he was able to enter him with 30 seconds remaining before they would close the line.

And now he was finally in the game; for the first time he would ever race in a major race.

And all the metrics and the predictors were against him. Neither his owner, his trainer nor his jockey had ever been in the Kentucky Derby. Most of them had never been in a major race. They'd never had a major win or run in a major race. They were decidedly outsiders: "newbies" in this elite arena. And the morning of the race, the odds against Rich Strike ... Do you remember what they were? Eighty to one. Eighty to one! And those were the second worst odds in Kentucky Derby history. I mean, it's the second highest odds.

And halfway through the race, he was 16 horse lengths back. And, in fact, if you go back and look at this, the drone over the field could not find Rich Strike. [Congregation laughs] Right? So they couldn't zoom it out wide enough to get Rich Strike in the field of vision, right?

So they're ... [Laughs] The crowd is packed. And Rich Strike, about halfway through the race, begins to make his move. And every little opening -- if you watch the race -- every little opening, he just fills it! Any time there's a little space, he just went. So he went all the way from the back of the field -- worst position -- and then he made it to fifth. And then he made it to fourth. And every time, he would just seize that little moment.

And everyone's attention -- who was paying attention to the race at all -- was focused on the two famous front runners. And only within seconds before the finish the announcer suddenly realized that Rich Strike was right there. And with his very last breath -- his last sentence -- the announcer says, "*Rich Strike is coming up from the inside! Oh, my goodness! The long shot has won the Kentucky Derby!*" And that's literally the first time he says Rich Strike, is when he actually wins the race! He came out of nowhere; he wins the race!

And what I want you to see is that sometimes the commitments you make are more powerful than you've ever been led to believe. Because when you make a commitment -- a true commitment -- it's not your personality, it's not your ego, that backs up that commitment. It's God! You're literally writing a check that God backs up for you. When you make a commitment that is greater than the life that you've ever known before, heaven and earth begin to move on your behalf.

And tonight, it seems scary. It seems too much. It seems unrealistic that you should be so bold as to make a commitment to a life that's bigger than you've ever known before. But, literally, that's how it works! When a spiritual being says, "*I don't know how this is going to work, but I'm committed to it anyway,*" it's at that moment that heaven and earth begin to move for you.

And those of us that have thought, "*Well, that's egotistical*" or, "*That's too much*" or, "*That's not right; I shouldn't lay that big of a claim on God or on life or on myself. I should just be happy with my little life just the way it is.*" And there's nothing wrong with that! But there's nothing inherently right about it, either. That, when you're willing to make a claim to live your best life, you actually allow the Spirit of God to fully work on your behalf.

See, a little life doesn't require God. But a big life -- a big commitment; a big claim -- actually does require that you put God to the test. That you be willing to step out on a limb and see if your God is truly as active as you've been led to believe.

You know, this series that I'm doing is based on *The Game of Life* by Florence Shinn. And it was written almost 100 years ago. About 25 years ago, they came back and, if you've read *The Game of Life*, you know that the prominent pronoun is "he." It's written from 100-year-old English, and "he" is the dominant. So about 25 years ago, they came back and they rewrote this book. And so the version I've got for you tonight is *The Game of Life for Women*. So the dominant pronoun in this book is "she" and "her." So we're going to read just a section: a couple of paragraphs.

A person knowing the power of the word becomes very careful in her conversation. She has only to watch the reaction of her words to know that they do not return to her void. Through her spoken word, a woman continually makes laws for herself. I knew a woman who said, "I always miss a cab," and invariably the cab always pulled away before she arrived. Her daughter, on the other hand, said, "I always catch my cab; it's sure to come just as I get there." This has occurred for years. Each had made a separate law for herself: one of failure, one of success.

So we began to look at this *Game of Life*. And the first week we looked at the games that you're playing. And I invited you to really look at the game that you play in life. And is the game big enough for you? Do you enjoy the game? Is the game meaningful for you? Are you living a life where you love the game you're playing?

And then last week we looked at this idea of having a vision for yourself -- for your life -- and really living into that vision.

And then tonight I want to talk about speaking the word. And in this quote, what I love about it is that, as you speak the word, you actually create law for yourself. Now, in an infinite Universe, right? If you say, "*I always miss the train*" or, "*I always miss my golden opportunity*" or, "*When my ship arrives, I'm at the airport*" or ... [Congregation laughs] You know, whatever your statement may be, right? What you say actually creates the law of your life.

Now, does that mean it's the law for everybody? No! It's your law; you've spoken it into creation. And because you've spoken into creation, it becomes the law that rules your life. So once you have a vision for your life -- once you have a picture of what you want your life to look like -- then we have to speak the word and watch that word go out and do the very thing it was intended to do. That, as we speak the word, we actually create a new reality.

Reading from Mark 9:21: "*And Jesus asked the father, 'How long has your son been like this?' And he said, 'From birth. For it has often cast him into the fire and into the water to destroy him. But if you can help -- if you can do anything -- have pity on us and help us.'* And Jesus said, '*If I can?!? All things are possible to him who believes.'* And immediately the father cried out and said, '*I believe; help thou my unbelief!*'"

I really want you to see the power of your words to create the next version of your life. How many of you remember the affirmation I gave you at the beginning of this series? Do you remember it?

"Every day, in every way, my life is getting better and better and better."

Do you want to say it with me? [With congregation]: "*Every day, in every way, my life is getting better and better and better.*"

Now, that affirmation, right? I invited you to make a commitment for 40 days, 100 times a day. That affirmation is creating a new law for your life. And the new law is that every day in every way that your life is getting better and better and better. How many of you would be happy that was just getting better and better and better? Now, as you speak that, it becomes your reality.

How many of you have met Julia in the bookstore? Well, Julia in the bookstore -- as you know -- [Laughs] I love her! I mean, I hired her when she got here a hundred years ago. I love her; she's fabulous! And she said, "*Richard, I've actually been doing it.*" [Congregation laughs]

I said, "*What?*"

And she said, "*Your challenge; I've done it!*"

And I said, "*Julia, I want you to put it out on Facebook, because I want other people to hear how this is working in your life.*" So here's what she had to say:

I've been doing this every morning and I am loving it! I feel better physically; my thinking is clearer; and I'm actually a little more enthusiastic about starting my day. I do it in groups of 20 (10 at usual speaking speed and 10 really fast) and the goal is completed pretty quickly. I am really glad that, when I first heard about your challenge, I ignored my inner eye roll.

[Congregation laughs] Can't you see Julia doing that? [Rolls eyes]

LOL. Thank you, Rev. Richard!

And then Lynn followed up and said:

I've been doing it as well, and having a very similar experience! I timed how long it takes me to say it 100 times, and it takes me seven minutes. So I set my timer, because I don't want to have to count. And it helps me focus with my energy and excitement on the words.

So let's say it one more time: [With congregation] *"Every day, in every way, my life is getting better and better and better."*

See, one of the things I want you to know is that, once you have a vision of your life -- once you've made this commitment to a greater life -- I want you to see the power of your spoken word to make that a reality. To set the law; to transform any situation. Because the old-time Unity people, they would speak the word! Man, they would speak the word, and it would be done!

And I want you to have that level of faith! That when you speak the word, you know that it's done. That when you speak the word, you can feel the power of God moving through you and opening doors and blessing and healing and creating miracles. That, once you have the vision, then your words have to line up with it.

Proverbs 18:21; it said, *"Death and life are in the power of the tongue."*

Who many of you can think of a word or a sentence or something that you've spoken that was really the opposite of what you wanted in your life? How many of you have ever said, *"My back is killing me"* or, *"This situation is ..."* We just say the things that are exactly the opposite of what we want.

Matthew 5:37: *"Let this communication be in you to say, "Yes, yes!" or "No, no!" For anything else ..." -- as my joke goes -- "For anything else makes God crazy."* Right? And so I want you to hear ... Actually what it says is, *"Anything else comes of evil."* Right?

But it's this idea that, when you have the vision -- when you've committed to the life that you want -- you've got to speak the word! With power and authority! And even if it's not the affirmation that we've been working on, then write your own! Create your own!

"I am prosperous!"

Together: [with congregation] *"I am prosperous!"*

"Every cell of my body responds to the healing power of God!"

Together: [with congregation] *"Every cell of my body responds to the healing power of God."*

Isaiah 55:11 says, *"So shall your word be that go forth out of your mouth; it shall not return to you void, but it shall accomplish that which you please, and it shall prosper you in the things and in the way you send it."*

Like, there are so many Scriptures that talk about the power of the word! To speak into the life that you want to live! And as we allow ourselves to make this big commitment to life, everything gets easier. We have this power.

Matthew 12:37 says, *"By the word you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned."*

Now, that's not really a happy thought! But it talks about the power that you have to set the tone for your life.

So where are you going? Where are you going?!? Because we can just kind of sit in the life that we always have had. And there's nothing that's wrong with that! Like, we can just play this life out to the end kind of the way it's always been. And there's literally nothing wrong with that. But I'm not sure it builds our faith. I'm not sure it really moves us in a greater direction.

But when you have a vision in your heart and your soul for a life that you've always wanted -- for a desire, whatever it may be -- and you begin to hold that vision for yourself, actually seeing yourself living

that vision every day, that you begin to speak about it. You begin to speak from your soul -- from the depths of your soul -- knowing that, every day, you have the ability to claim the infinite goodness of God. So whatever your statement is ... If you don't have a statement, this week I want you to have a statement, and I'm going to invite you to say it 100 times a day for the next 40 days.

Now, if you change your statement daily, is that as powerful as taking one statement and allowing it to really work on you? I find that I have to hold the statement for at least 40 days before I really begin to see the full impact of a statement. If every day I'm making up a new statement, it's all good! But it's not really a commitment. A commitment allows us to go in one direction, and it allows us to pick up speed and become more and more effective. More and more powerful. More and more faithful.

So if you were going to look at one area of your life -- one area in your life that you would be willing to live a bigger, greater, more wonderful expression of God -- what would that be? And have you committed to that yet?

"Well, Richard, what if it doesn't happen?" Well, what if it does? [Congregation laughs]

"Well, Richard, I'd be so disappointed!" Alright ... But what if it does?

What if you could move beyond the fears that have kept you in a small, little life, and you could really make a commitment tonight to play a much bigger game for God? Would you be willing to do that?

And then if you make a commitment to that, would you be willing to speak into that experience over and over again, and feel the faith building in you every day?

"Every day, in every way, my life is getting better and better and better."

Together: [with congregation] *"Every day, in every way, my life is getting better and better and better."*

Will you pray with me?

I invite you to open your mind, your heart, your soul to the activity of God. That tonight, we put it to the test. We make a claim! We make a commitment to a greater life! And we are willing to let our words reflect that faith, that power, that decision. And we do it every day! Every day we do it. Because we are building our faith. We're building a belief in the abundance and the infinite blessings of God every day. And we give thanks! We give thanks for every good thing; every blessing. And so it is. Amen.