

# **BREAKTHROUGH-Part 1**

**Week #1 of a 2-Week Series**

**August 7, 2022**

**With Rev. Richard Rogers**

Alright; you ready for today? Okay, so here we go!

My question for you today is: Do you ever feel overwhelmed by life? You don't have to raise your hand; we know who you are! [Congregation laughs] Right? And there's this Chinese -- and it's actually a curse. It's sometimes called the Chinese blessing, but really when you understand it, it's a Chinese curse. And it says, *"May you live in interesting times."*

How many of you feel like your life right now -- and the world you're living in -- is an interesting time? Right? And so what I want us to talk about today is: How do we live in interesting times? How do we live with stuff happening in our lives?

Because there's a part of us that wants us to get up ... I want to get up here and say, you know, *"Isn't life great?"* And my concern is: Everybody is going, *"No!"* [Congregation laughs] *"My life's a hot mess right now!"*

And I don't want you to think that Unity is just here to support you when your life is good. Because sometimes it's not! And it doesn't mean we're not living a spiritual process. Because sometimes the most difficult times and phases in our lives create the greatest growth opportunities, where we get to really practice believing in God. Where we really get to discover how much God; how much power; how much wisdom; how much faith; how much love we have within us. And so sometimes the moments -- the times -- that are the hardest really are the spiritually most beneficial.

But we actually have to live them from a spiritual point of view. We actually have to decide that we want to grow into those moments. That we want to be more in those moments. That we want to uncover how much more God is within us. That's why in Unity we teach spiritual principles. That's why we teach that the presence and power of God is within you. That we can overcome every issue through the power of the Divine within.

Eckhart Tolle said it this way: *"You shall use a challenge to awaken you, or you can allow it to pull you even deeper into sleep."*

How many of you ever had a problem, and all you've wanted to do is pull the covers back over your head and go back to bed? Right? And so there is that human part of us that -- when the challenges arrive; when stuff is happening -- there's a part of us that wants to say, *"Mayday! Mayday! Who do I talk to? How do I get out of this?"* Right?

And yet, from a spiritual point of view, I believe that we have to embrace those moments for us to get the biggest bang; for us to be blessed in the greatest possible way.

The full quote, if you want to hear it, from Eckhart Tolle is this: *"The best indicator of your level of consciousness is how you deal with life challenges when they come. Through those challenges, an already unconscious person tends to become deeply more unconscious, and a conscious person more intensely conscious. You can use a challenge to awaken you, or you can allow it to pull you even deeper into sleep. The dream of an ordinary, unconscious person then turns into a nightmare."*

How many of you can think of a time in your life where your life felt like a nightmare? Anybody? Right? And what I want you to see is how often in those situations, in those moments -- as spiritual beings when we don't want to wake up; when we don't want to know the power of God within us -- those moments become nightmares because we feel like the bogeyman is bigger than the presence of God within us.

And over and over again, I promise you that you're going to have times that challenge you. And it's not to take you out! It's not to destroy you! It's so that you can know the full presence and power of God

within you. So that you can know that God in you is greater than anything that's going on in your life. So the key to this and how we, let's say, awake in these moments is by using spiritual tools.

**And the first one is that we never run from life.** Like, the human part of us ... When life is happening, there's a human part of us that wants to run the other direction. We see the storm's coming, and we want to run the other direction. But as a spiritual being, what I want you to see is that your job is to stay awake and to stay present even during the storm, because that's what will allow you to uncover all the God that is within you.

How many of you know the difference between a buffalo and cattle? [Congregation laughs] Now I know you're all degreed biologists, right? And when I heard this, I was amazed! Right? So when cattle are out on the range and a storm is coming, cattle run the other direction from the storm. Now, at some level that makes sense. *"Storm's coming; let's get away from it."* So they run in the direction away from the storm. But what happens to cattle is: Because they're running in actually the direction the storm is moving, they end up spending a lot more time in the storm.

Now buffalo are smarter! They haven't been domesticated. When a storm is coming up on the horizon, buffalo run toward the storm. They actually run full force toward the storm, because they know that if they run at the storm, the time they spend in the storm is much less than if you're cattle.

So the whole point of my talk today is: Be buffalo! [Congregation and Rev. Rogers laugh] If you remember nothing else that I say today: Be buffalo!

When you see the storms brewing in your life ... How many of you can see a week, a month, sometimes even a year, you know something's coming; you can feel it! You can feel it in your bones that something's coming. And there's a human part of us that wants to run away and hide. We want to be little mice and find someplace to hide.

But we're born to be buffalo! [Congregation laughs] Buffalo! Have you ever seen a real buffalo? They're enormous! I mean, their head is bigger than me; they're enormous! Right? And they run toward the storm! Why? Because buffalo have faith. They're not afraid of no stinkin' storm! They run toward the storm.

Be buffalo!

So my question for you today is: Where are you running from life? Where are you trying to pretend the storm's not coming? And you can feel it; you can sense it; you know it's coming, and you're trying to run the other direction. Where in your life do you need to engage the full power of God within you and run toward the storm?

There's an 18th century Muslim jurist, Imam Al-Shafi. And he said this: *"My heart is at ease, knowing that what is meant for me will never miss me. And what misses me was never meant for me."*

Every storm that rolls into your life is designed for your soul's greatness. Because the power of God in you is greater than any situation or circumstance; any storm; any obstacle; any challenge. God in you is greater than that! And if we keep running from our storms, we never get the spiritual benefit. You never really get to find out how much God is in you; how great God in you truly is! Because you keep playing small.

But it's when we turn and face the issue; face the obstacle; face the challenge and actually run toward it that we discover the full presence and power of God that is within us.

And part of us thinks, *"It shouldn't be this way. My life shouldn't have problems. I shouldn't have challenges. I shouldn't have obstacles. I'm a good person; it should be easy and smooth and light and unicorns and daisies and happy faces."*

But sometimes life's not that! Sometimes life is hard! And we have to decide in those moments that look hard which way are we going to turn. Are we going to turn God? Or are we going to turn toward our fears? Because we were born to be greater than our fears. We were born to be greater than any obstacle.

Norman Vincent Peale said, *"In every difficult situation, there's a great potential for value. Believe this, and you begin to look for it. To observe obstacles as necessary stepping stones to gain success, you will start to welcome them, not to spend energy trying to avoid them, or to mentally suppress them."*

So how do we do this?

Well, there's this little verse in Proverbs 3. It's two lines. Verses 5 and 6. And I believe that it really gives us the key; it gives us the way to truly live life: how to do it. How to embrace these challenging times. How to overcome the issues that are before us. And these two little lines say this: *"Trust in the Lord with all your heart. Do not rely on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make straight your path."*

Now here's the deal. The last line of this: in some verses it says, *"He will make straight and smooth your path."* Do I believe that God -- that if I put God first -- that my life gets easier? Yes! But is that a promise that nothing is ever going to happen that upsets you? No!

Like, we have to erase from our mindset that, when something is happening, God is punishing you. I believe the opposite is true! The bigger the hurdle; the bigger the obstacles; the bigger the challenge, the more that God is inviting you to step up and to take greater action to be more than you've ever been before.

So how do we do that?

The first one is that you have to trust the Lord, your God, with all your heart. So that means we have to surrender. We have to trust life, trust God.

So will you say with me, *"I trust life"*?

Together: [with congregation] *"I trust life."*

Now let's just say it like you mean it, okay?

One more time: [with congregation] *"I trust life."*

One more time, just like we almost mean it. Together: [with congregation] *"I trust life."*

Now let's say, *"I trust God."*

Together: [with congregation] *"I trust God."*

That means that, with anything that's going on in your life, you trust life and you trust God. Is that true? With everything in your life, you trust God and you trust life. Got a little quiet in here! [Congregation laughs] Right? Because we want to believe! We want to become believers!

How many of you have ever had that person come up and knock on your door and ask if you were a believer? [Congregation laughs] Like, are you a believer? And I always think to myself, *"Are you a believer? Like, you're a minister, Richard; you should know that you're a believer, right?"* [Congregation laughs]

Like, there's a part of us that says, *"But do I really believe? Do I really believe? Not just the words that I use, but do I really believe in my heart and my soul? Do I really believe in God? Because if I really believed in God, how much fear would I have? How many times would I pull the covers over my head and just hope that it went away? Or over and over again, when I dig deep; when I step into the moment; when I step into the challenge; when I step into the problem do I know that God in me is greater?"*

See, I want you to be a believer!

I keep hearing that Monkey's song going through my head. You know which one I'm talking about? [Sings very high]: *"I'm a believer; I couldn't leave her ..."* Sorry! [Addresses soloist] That's why you have your job and I don't go there. [Congregation laughs] Just sayin'. Right?

I want you to believe in God! I want you to believe that God is in you! I want you to believe that God in you can overcome anything! And I want you to know that whatever happens; whatever comes up;

whatever trials; whatever tribulation; whatever stuff is in front of you, that God in you is greater than that!

Because there's a moment where your soul masters life. And it's not easy! Where you know that whatever life brings you, God in you is greater than that. That you can overcome it!

And the second part of really trusting God. Jesus said the most important thing was that you love the Lord, your God, with all your mind, your heart, your soul. That we love God! That we love God! Because the more that we love God, the more that we feel God's love for us. And when you really trust somebody; when you really trust somebody, it's because you know they love you.

My wife one time was eating an apple and I said, "*Can I have a bite?*" And she said, "*Sure!*" And she gave it to me, and I looked at it to make sure I wasn't biting into the wormhole. [Congregation laughs] Have you ever done that? And I turned it around and my wife said to me, "*Have I ever given you the bad part of the apple?*" [Congregation laughs] I said, "*I can't think of one time.*" And I realized that the people you love; you give them your best.

God loves you! God has equipped you with everything you need to get through this life. You have all the power; the wisdom; the faith to get through every aspect of life. But you have to have the courage to face it; to move into it; to overcome it; to be an overcomer.

And then the next line in Proverbs was, "*And do not rely on your own insight.*"

One of the challenges that we face is that we get pretty used to being us. And we tend to make the same choices -- plus or minus -- over and over again. And part of the way that I understand this Scripture is that we actually have to seek God. We have to seek guidance. We have to seek direction. We actually have to open our minds and ask God to guide us in what we're being called to do. Because if we don't stop, we will just continue to do what we always do.

See, there's really three ways in any issue -- in any choice -- there's really three ways that we can respond to it.

The first one is that we could do what we always do; we can do it based on our past. And that feels so normal to us: to make decision based on our past. Because we've made that decision a hundred, a thousand, a million times before. So we keep choosing what we've done over and over and over again, and wondering why we're not getting the results that we want.

The second thing that we can do is we can kind of think through the problem. We can try to mentally solve the problem. And we get all in our thoughts, and we figure it out. And we ask experts and we read things and talk to people. And we go into our mind; we try to figure it out.

Third way we can do it is that we can just ask God for direction. But to ask God for direction, you actually have to stop. It's hard to ask for direction at 90 miles an hour; I've tried! Right? You actually have to stop the mental process; you have to get still.

In Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park* we read: "*We have all a better guide in ourselves, if we would attend to it, than any other person can be.*"

And Steve Jobs said it this way: "*Have the courage to follow your heart and your intuition. They somehow already know what you truly want to become. Everything else is secondary.*"

And Rumi said it this way: "*Let yourself be silently drawn by a strange pull of what you really love. It will not lead you astray.*"

Richard Branson: "*I rely more deeply on my gut instinct than any research or huge amount of statistics.*"

The last one, from Elisabeth Elliot in the book, *Quest for Love*: "*Does it make sense to pray for guidance about the future if you're not obeying the thing that lies before you today? How many momentous events and Scripture depended on a person's small act of obedience today? Rest assured; do what God tells you now, and depend on it, and it will be shown to you what to do next.*"

In *Inc. Magazine*, a magazine that I don't always quote in church .... But in *Inc. Magazine* they did a whole article on how many successful people use their intuition -- what they call their gut knowledge -- as opposed to the research. And it made a case that the most successful people are very, very intuitive. And they've learned to trust their intuition. It goes on to say, though, that according to research published by the project manager degree, only 50% of Americans trust their gut to tell them what's true. Moreover, only 62% of the business executives often rely on their gut feeling.

So what I want you to see is: The most successful people trust their intuition. Everybody else is too scared to trust it! So we keep doing things by the book; we do it by the policy; we do it by what other people expect; we do it by what we learned 20, 30, 40 years ago. And we keep making these decisions. But the most successful people trust their intuition and choose that over and over again. And it works for them!

How many of you ... Do you guys remember radio stations? [Congregation laughs] Are you holding up? Like, there used to be radio. Like, when I was a kid, radio was the big deal. Right? When you were growing up, was radio the big deal? And when I was growing up, radio was the big deal. And I had my radio station, and they played my music. And if somebody played with the dial, I knew if it was my radio station. Because I just knew the sound of the DJs' voices; I knew their names; I knew the songs. I knew my radio station!

And I want you to see that guidance is just like that. That the more you listen to God, the more you know how God communicates with you. You'll get your radio station dialed in!

Some of us are feelers; some of us are knowers; some of us just get senses; some of us hear things; some of us actually see things. But all of us have been wired for spiritual guidance. The question is: Are you willing to stop and listen? To allow yourself to actually live a spiritually guided life?

The *Inc. Magazine* article went on and said there are two things that are required to develop a greater sense of intuition. This is *Inc. Magazine*! How many of you know what *Inc. Magazine* is? It's a magazine about entrepreneurship and business. And they said there are two things that are required to develop a greater degree of intuition.

One is that you have to spend time in silence. How spiritual does that sound? Right? Prayer and meditation: you have to spend time in silence so that you actually hear the way that Spirit speaks to you.

The second thing it said is that you just have to be able to discern between your fear and your guidance, your intuition.

How many of you know that the difference: when you're facing your fears, and when you're actually being guided? Like, we have to tune in! We have to know how God speaks to us so we know the difference between the burrito we ate for lunch and spiritual guidance. I tried that joke at 9 o'clock; it didn't work any better at 11. [Congregation laughs] Thank God there's not a 1 o'clock service, right? Right?

But it's that idea that we actually have to dial in; we have to know what God is saying. So we have to activate our intuition. We have to listen; we have to trust it; and we have to put it to work.

And the third thing that Proverbs said is that we have to acknowledge God in everything. Now, does God need you to acknowledge God? Does Spirit need your acknowledgement? No! But you need to acknowledge God, because the more you acknowledge God, the more it builds your faith!

If you have a miracle; if you have a healing; if you put guidance to work, and it works, you need to realize that it was God! It was that intuition; it wasn't your ego! Because how many of you know that your ego will claim every good thing that ever happens to you? Right?

That over and over again, we need to acknowledge God, because it builds our faith. If God heals you; blesses you; transforms you; if God leads you through a difficult situation, we need to acknowledge God so that we remember that God got us here! It was the Spirit; it was the presence; it was the power of God that allowed us to overcome it.

And as we acknowledge God, our faith goes through the roof! We become more faithful; we become more powerful! We actually become more wise! Because we live the truth.

In Deuteronomy 8:7-10 we read this: "For the Lord, your God, is bringing you into a good land. A land with brooks and streams and deep springs gushing out into the valley; into the hills. A land with wheat and barley; vines and fig trees; pomegranates, olive oil and honey. A land where bread will not be scarce. Where you will not lack anything. A land where the rocks are iron, and you can dig copper out of the hills. And when you have eaten and are satisfied, praise the Lord, your God. For God has given you the land that you own."

See, the whole premise is: God wants to bless you. That God wants you to overcome every challenge. That every obstacle is a stepping stone to a greater life; to a greater spiritual life; to truly discovering the power of God within you.

And you ready for your homework? Your homework this week is: I want you to look if there's any area in your life where you are running the wrong direction. I want you to actually turn and face the challenge. Turn and face the problem. And ask God for guidance. Ask to be directed; ask to heal or bless or a miracle, or whatever you need. But learn that you can march toward a problem and be an overcomer.

Will you pray with me?

I want you to open your heart, your mind, your soul to the activity of God. That there is only One -- one presence; one power; one God; one good -- moving in and through us all. And today we give thanks for the power that is greater than every obstacle; every challenge; every problem. And we are more than that! That we were created in the image of the One, and we are endowed with all that God is. So today we move forward in faith, knowing that God in us is powerful. In the name and through the power of Jesus Christ we pray. And so it is. Amen.

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