

THERE IS ONLY ONE

Week #1 of a 5-Week Series, "The Five Unity Principles"

January 8, 2023

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So how are you? Happy New Year! [Congregation: Happy New Year!] You ready to go?

Mark Twain once said that, *"If you have to eat a live frog"* -- Just sayin'! [Congregation laughs -- *"Do it first thing in the morning, and nothing will be worse all the rest of the day."*] [Congregation laughs]

So if that opportunity ever presents itself to you, remember go early and go strong!

Brian Tracy said, *"If you have to eat two live frogs, eat the ugly one first."* [Congregation laughs]
Something you can live by all year, right?

So Richard took a vacation and left me with the first power of Unity. We're doing a five-week series on the fundamentals of Unity. And the first principle: for many of us, it is the big frog to swallow. And if we can get our arms around this first principle, all the other ones seem relatively easy.

The first principle says that **THERE IS ONLY ONE PRESENCE AND ONE POWER IN THE UNIVERSE AND IN OUR LIVES: GOD THE GOOD.** And that God is absolute good.

And for many of us, that is a challenge to get our arms around. We were raised in a world of duality and believed that there were two powers. That God was clearly working on the side of good, but Satan was working on the side of evil. And for many of us, that was kind of an exciting thing. Because any time we misbehaved, we could say, *"The devil made me do it."* [Congregation laughs] Right? Shaggy wrote a whole song about it. "It Wasn't Me." Right?

And the whole idea here is that, when we don't want to take responsibility for our life, there's this "out." There's this, *"It wasn't me."* You know, you see a politician get up and say, *"The devil got ahold of me. I'm not responsible."* And the truth is: his mama should have gotten ahold of him a long time ago! [Congregation laughs]

So how do we get our arms around this one? The idea that there's only one Power?

See, this idea of two powers pre-dates Christianity. Zoroastrianism is the oldest -- or one of the oldest -- faiths in the world. And the basis of this teaching is that there is this dualistic cosmology of good and evil fighting out in the world. And that you and I are just pawns in this great cosmic fight that is going on. And good and evil are at work in each one of us, trying to get the good side to win or the evil side to win. And we are just pawns in this war. We are just players in a cosmic game.

And yet, when we really look at that -- when we take that into prayer; when we really dive deep into that possibility -- there's something that doesn't ring true. Like, there's a greater goodness that we've all touched into in one way or the other that calls us higher.

And you say, *"But Richard, doesn't the Bible talk about Jesus and Satan?"* It's like: Yes. But when you look at Jesus' concept of Satan, it's like a personal ego. He relates to Satan as if it is his shadow self.

Reading from Matthew 4:

"Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. "

Let me just read that again.

"Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil."

Now [laughs], why would that happen? Like, why would we be called to be tempted? Like, if you were called to be the Messiah of the world, would you want to know that you've already earned your stripes? Right? And there was a part of Jesus that had a huge mission. And he needed to know that he had everything he needed within him to execute the mission that was in front of him.

"So then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. And he fasted for 40 days and 40 nights."

Now, if you're anything like me, after you've been fasting for 40 days and 40 nights, you're going to see visions. [Congregation laughs] Amen? [Congregation: "Amen"] Like, they might be golden arches, but you're going to see visions! [Congregation laughs] Right? You're going to hear voices calling to you!

"And so the tempter came to him and said, 'If you are truly the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread.' And he answered him, 'It is written, 'For man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeded out of the mouth of God.'"

Then the devil took him to the holy city and set him on the pinnacle of the temple and said, 'If you truly are the Son of God, throw yourself down, for it is written, 'He will give his angels charge over you' and 'On their hands they will bear you up, lest you not strike your foot against the stone.'

And Jesus said to him, 'Again, it is written, 'You shall not tempt the Lord your God.'

And again, the devil took him to a very high mountain, and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and the glory that could be found there. And he said, 'All of these I will give unto you if you will fall down and worship me.'

And Jesus said to him, 'Begone, Satan! For it is written, 'You shall worship the Lord your God with all you have, and you shall serve him alone.'

And then the devil left him, and behold, angels came and ministered to him."

I believe that what Jesus truly demonstrated was the sovereignty over himself and over his own personal ego.

Sovereignty is defined as *"supreme power or authority."* *"The authority of a state or government of itself or another state."* And the third definition -- the one that I'm going to be talking about today: *"It is a self-governing state."*

That, for many of us, our next spiritual step is when we take complete dominion and mastery over ourselves. That many times in our life, we've wanted to live like a victim or live from a powerless mindset. But the true power of God that is within each one of us demands that there's a moment where we accept that power and that authority.

In Unity, we believe that God is absolute good ... but that we were all given free will. I want you to hold that for a minute. That God is absolute good -- infinite goodness -- but that each of us has the power to choose our life experience. And that God -- even God in Its infinite goodness -- cannot violate our right to choose.

Each and every one of us can go in any direction we choose. We have a God-given right to be as miserable as we need to be. Can I get an *"Amen?"* [Congregation: *"Amen"*]

Right? If you want to go to some dark places, God will not stop you. If you want to practice destructive behavior, God will not stop you. You have free will! If you want to invite evil things into your life, you have that right. But God is still absolute good for each and every one of us, and we can allow that goodness; we can invite that goodness; we can focus our mind and our heart on that higher level of good and -- in that moment -- know the full glory of God.

Imagine, if you will with me, a level of goodness that is infinite in all directions. But that each and every one of us gets to choose how much good we feel that we are worthy of. Why would anyone choose anything less than absolute goodness when absolute goodness is available to us? We choose it because we only believe that we are worthy of this much. And as we choose again and again and again, we are lifted to a higher level -- to a greater level of good -- that truly is God's will to bestow upon us.

Jesus said, *"It's the Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom."* God wants you to be blessed ... and very blessed. But you have to get right with that within yourself. You have to decide that you're worthy of that level of goodness.

Some of us go to the Infinite and ask for a thimble full. And some of us go to the Infinite and accept all the good that God is. And today, as we begin this first Sunday -- or the second Sunday ... the first real Sunday [laughs with congregation] of the new year -- I'm going to challenge you to open a space for greater good: all the good that God has for you!

Because sovereignty requires that we take responsibility for our own choices. That we are not afraid to claim good and only good.

See, it's always a little amazing when people of faith are living in fear. Because if people of faith are living in fear, how do you understand that? Do you believe that God is good or not? If you believe that God is good, and as you claim God is good and only good in your life, then only good comes to you now!

There is but one Presence and one Power in the Universe and in my life: God the good.

Would you like to say that with me?

[With congregation]: *"There is but one Presence and one Power in the Universe and in my life: God the good."*

And the moment you claim the power of God in your life, everything in your life begins to move.

Good and only good is my divine birthright! But until you align your will with the infinite goodness and the infinite will of God, there's a level of craziness that we all dance with.

How many of you have danced with crazy? [Congregation laughs] You think it's going to be so much fun. [Congregation laughs] Right? Have you ever danced with crazy? You think it's going to be so much fun, and you realize, *"Oh, no! It's just crazy!"* And it just stays crazy or gets crazier!

There is but one Presence and one Power because you are sovereign. You have the right to decide and the right to claim the level of good that you accept in your life. And heaven and earth begin to move to establish that level because you decree a thing, and it is established unto you.

Good -- and only good -- is coming into my life right now!

Together: [with congregation] *"Good -- and only good -- is coming into my life right now!"*

And as you declare it, it is established! Now, there is infinite good -- infinite good! But you have to actually claim the level of good that you believe in. The level of good that you believe that you deserve and that you have the sovereign right to have and to know and to live in that level of good.

So look at your life for a minute. Is there any place in your life now where you're dealing with fear? Maybe in your health; in your finances; in your work; with a family member; maybe with our country [laughs]. And would you be willing today to claim the possibility -- the reality -- that good and only good is coming to you now?

Good -- and only good -- is coming to you now.

Together: [with congregation] *"Good -- and only good -- is coming to me now."*

And the moment you claim that authority, the Universe begins to work to re-establish your life at the next highest level of good.

How many of you are meditators? Fabulous! One of the things that I've experienced in meditation is the experience of knowing the goodness of God in meditation. In my experience with meditation, I don't go to dark places. When I close eyes and open my mind and my heart to God, I go to higher and higher levels of good.

And I believe that's the same for all of us! That only in our mind can we create a reality where there is an absence of God. Now, we can choose it by our behavior. But there is good -- and only good -- available to each and every one of us when we choose that level of life. That you are sovereign! You have the power to decree a thing. And when you claim a life that is fully focused on the one Presence and the one Power, everything in your life lines up with that truth.

And as we begin this new year, can you imagine dedicating this entire year to good and only good? Just clearly standing in the absolute realization that God has only good for you this year? And that you can allow that level of goodness to be greater than you've ever known before? That you could have that much faith; be that clear; be that powerful that you could decree a thing? That you could be sovereign over your own life?

Good -- and only good -- comes to me now.

Together: [with congregation] *"Good -- and only good -- comes to me now."*

One more time like we mean it! [With congregation] *"Good -- and only good -- comes to me now."*

One more time: [with congregation] *"Good -- and only good -- comes to me now."*

Will you pray with me?

And I want you to open your mind, your heart, your soul, and to step into the next highest level of goodness for your life. That we let go of all fears and insecurities. And we claim that we are sovereign over our own life. That we have placed God first. That there truly is one Power at work in our life and in the life of our family and friends and in our world! God; good; love; joy; peace; hope are now sovereign in our life.

Thank you, God, that this year we release all fear. And we stand in the truth of who we are. As sons and daughters of the Most High -- heirs to all that God is -- we are not here for little things. We are here to take dominion over our lives.

So in all things we look to Christ, and in all things we give thanks. And so it is. Amen.

God bless you all! have a great week and a great year!

[Congregation applauds]

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