

WHAT NOW?

Sunday, April 16, 2023

Rev. Richard Rogers

You ready? [Congregant loudly: "Yes!"] [Congregation laughs] The room is on fire; I can feel it! Can we get an "Amen"? [Congregation: "Amen!"]

Do you have goals? Wow! We've got one lady in the second row's got goals! Let's hear it for her, right? [Congregation laughs and applauds]

So if one person in this room has a goal [congregation laughs] ... *"Well, Richard; I got up this morning! That was my primary goal; I got up again!"* [Congregation laughs]

So I want to talk about allowing your life to be driven by goals. See, I think there's really two ways we can do life: we can do it randomly or we can do it systematically. When we do it randomly, whatever shows up we call it great. When we do it systematically, we're a little bit more intentional. We tend to put a little more thought and energy into really co-creating with God the next level of our life.

And for most of us, there's this dance that we do with God. And sometimes in this dance with God, we get to lead. We get to pick the music; we get to pick the steps. And Spirit just says, "Yes!" And Spirit follows along, and it's a beautiful thing! And then sometimes God wants to change the music ... and we go, *"Waaaaaait a minute!"* [Congregation laughs] Right? We like it much more when we're deciding what's going to happen next.

But in life, there seems to be this dance that we're doing where sometimes Spirit says, *"You go! You create it exactly the way you want it!"* And sometimes Spirit says, *"No; we're not going that way. Like, you could have a great life if you went that way, but if you go this way, it would be spectacular!"*

And sometimes our little ego gets involved and we say, *"No; no! I want to go this way! This is my plan; this is my strategy. I've worked it out in my head. This is how it's going to go."* And Spirit says, *"That is just so cute of you ..."* [Congregation laughs] *"But we're going this way. I can see from a higher point of view, and we're going this way."* And our little ego gets involved and says, *"I'm mad. I don't want to go that way. This is my plan; this is my process. We're going this way."*

How many of you can think of a time in your life where Spirit wanted you to move in a direction you didn't want to go, and it turned out to be the best thing that could have ever happened? And so we know that we're doing this dance. And sometimes we get so involved in it we don't want to let go

Michael Singer -- in his book, *The Surrender Experiment*, which I think is a great book! -- invited us to let go of the wheel of our life and allow Spirit to guide us to higher and higher levels of good.

But I also believe that we were given intuition and intelligence for a reason. And with intuition, God gives us a window to look and see the greater possibilities for our life. And with intelligence, we can actually prepare ourselves to go into and live a greater life. Because I believe that sometimes we need a little prep time before we're ready for all the good that God has for us. That sometimes the life that God is offering us is so good that we need to get ourselves together to really step into that life. And the role of intuition and intelligence is to prepare us for that.

And I truly believe that our goals are one of the ways that we create a greater life. Through the activity of setting goals, we actually imagine a life that's greater than we've ever had before. And our goals can really be our path -- or our guidance along the path -- to how great of a life are you living.

Now, you don't have to have goals. You can just go unconscious. You can just rumble through life and not pay attention to anything. But I want you to see the value in actually imagining your greatest life.

Envisioning it! Allowing to build faith and a vision for what your life could be. And then allowing yourself to take the steps with God to get to that level of life. We have that power within us!

And some of us know that ... [laughs] ... if it was just left to us, we would want to control everything. Do you have any controllers in the room? [Congregation laughs] Now, if you're a controller, you might have been told by others that you have a little bit of an issue. [Congregation laughs] Right? That your need to control everything can sometimes be problematic. So for us who are controllers, when you think about goals, we think, "*Great! This is going to be fabulous! I get to tell the Universe exactly how it's going to work!*"

So we have to find this balance between being open and receptive to the upward guidance of Spirit, but also using our intelligence and our intuition and our creativity to create the greatest life that we can imagine. To allow ourselves to live into a higher level of good.

So how do we use our goals?

First one is: I believe in being specific. When setting goals, I think it's important that we create an image is as accurate as we can be. Now, that image is the greatest that you can imagine, but it's not the greatest that God can imagine! So when you're holding a goal for your life, as you're building faith around it, as you're breathing life into it, I want it to be the best that you can imagine. But I also want you to be willing to let it go if there's actually something greater that God has for you. So **be specific.**

Make it measurable so that you can see how you're progressing toward that endeavor.

Set a date; **set a deadline.** And this one is the one that, for me, sometimes is the one that fouls me up the most. Because sometimes my ego gets so involved in the date that I forget to surrender to God. I forget to release it and allow the Spirit of God in a higher, greater way.

And I want you to **write them down.** I want you to **visualize them daily.** And I also want your goals to be a stretch, but also **be realistic.**

And then the final one -- seven of the points -- is: I want you to **celebrate your success along the way.**

You know, over the last several years I've been doing corporate coaching. Consulting. And one of the things that I have found working with successful organizations is: sometimes they struggle with celebrating their success. Sometimes they're so committed to what's next that they forget to celebrate what they just did. And sometimes it leaves their people feeling a little frustrated and a little deflated, because there's always the next goal. And they're always moving to the next goal without really celebrating how far they've already come.

I was working with one executive and I said, "*How did you celebrate this milestone that you reached?*" And it was like just a blank stare. "*Like, what do you mean, celebrate?*" I said, "*Your team just did this amazing thing! You presented an idea to them; they bought into it; they did everything it takes so you could get there. And how did you celebrate when it was done?*" Nothing!

I said, "*Okay; so we're going to do this one differently. We're going to celebrate all the way along the path so that your team gets a win ... not just in the big events, but in all the little events.*"

And I think, for some of us, we don't think that we get to celebrate until we've gotten completely to the end of the project. Or when the goal is perfect in every way. And I want you to see that, as we celebrate all along the way, everything becomes more fun. Right? If you celebrate all the little steps, you actually are more excited about getting to a goal; accomplishing your desire!

That all the goals that we have in life: I want you to see that it's really your opportunity to co-create with God. That you are designed to be a co-creator with the Infinite. And as we learn to allow this process to unfold through us, we create goals that are exciting and enjoyable.

See, I believe this ministry: that we have two major functions. And it's a dual function. I think our first job in this ministry is to help you have a profound relationship with God. I want you to feel the presence of God in greater and greater ways. I want you to feel the presence of God in your life; in how you live; in the choices you make. And the second one: I want you to live your best life.

And those two things absolutely work side by side. So as we have a greater relationship with God, it makes it easier to have a great life. As we celebrate that God is our source, we become more and more excited about living a life that's enjoyable and full and rich and fabulous.

But sometimes, when it comes to our goals, we get too focused on our physical wants and needs. And I believe that our first goal should always be spiritual. There's something about when your first goal is spiritual!

You know, we read in Matthew 6:

"But seek ye first His kingdom and His righteousness, and then all things will be yours."

I want you to hear that! How fundamentally true that is! **When you put God first, then you get everything else!**

But many times in our lives, we put the details first with the idea that, if I get all this stuff done, then I'll have time for my spiritual life. And it's never the way it works!

How many of us have not taken time for prayer and meditation in the morning, because our day was too busy? And we start our day running, and we never get everything done. But if we actually start our day with prayer and meditation -- if we put God first -- then there's something that happens, and time expands. And we really then literally have all the time we need to accomplish all the things that are before us.

And it's the same with tithing. Sometimes somebody who's new to tithing and putting God first in their finances, this is a crazy idea. *"What do you mean I'm going to give 10% away. I can't afford to do that! There's not enough money to do that!"* And then they actually begin to practice tithing. And they put God first in their finances, and they watch as their finances become more than enough to meet all of their needs.

And it doesn't make sense, but it works that way! When you put God first in your life, then everything else is provided!

So I want you to have a spiritual goal. I want the first goal that you have, that you're working on -- the most important goal that you have -- to be a spiritual goal.

And let me tell you what a spiritual goal is not. If you say to yourself, *"I want a Ferrari and I'd like it in a spiritual, Mother Mary blue."* [Congregation laughs] You know the color of Mother Mary in all the statues? *"I want that Ferrari and I want it in Mother Mary blue."* Now, that -- in and of itself -- is or is not a spiritual goal? [Congregants: *"It's not."*] It's not a spiritual goal! There's nothing wrong with that goal, but it's not inherently spiritual.

If you say to yourself, *"I want to be in a relationship with somebody who meditates every day,"* is that a spiritual goal? It is for your partner, but it's not for you! [Congregation laughs] Right?

If you say, *"I want someone who worships me!"* It sounds like a spiritual goal ... [Congregation laughs] But it's not a spiritual goal, right?

So what is a spiritual goal?

A spiritual goal is: *"I want to know the will of God in my life and I want to put first in everything."* Is that a spiritual goal? Yes.

"I want to know complete oneness with God." Is that a spiritual goal? Yes!

"I want to practice unconditional love in my life." Is that a spiritual goal? Yes!

"I want to trust God with my finances and practice tithing." Is that a spiritual goal? I would say yes!

"I want to forgive everyone who's ever harmed me."

"I want to start each day with 20 minutes of meditation to be filled with God."

"I want to be on fire with God!"

Will you say that with me? [With congregation]: *"I want to be on fire with God!"*

One more time: [with congregation] *"I want to be on fire with God!"*

See, I want you to see that, when you have a spiritual goal first, everything else falls into place. But when you put everything else first and say, *"If there's time; if there's energy; if there's enough money, then I will get to my spiritual job; my spiritual work; my spiritual purpose."* What happens is: You never get there! You're never fully fulfilled, because you didn't put the most important thing first.

For me, as a young man, I began the process of the Master Mind that you do every Sunday here. And there was something that changed in me that was deep and dramatic about going through those steps. If you're in The 12 Step group, you know what those steps are. Those steps changed my life. Because it invited me every day to surrender to a Power greater than myself. Every day to decide that there was a Power greater than myself. And if I put that Power first, my life would be better. If I believed that there was a Power greater than my ego; greater than my personality ... that if I put that Power first, everything in my life would begin to change.

And I still believe that! I believe that, as spiritual people, we can put the focus on our outer world so heavily -- so strongly -- that we never get to our inner work. [Phone rings] See? God calls! [Congregation laughs] Right?

And **when we put the focus on our inner life, everything else is provided.**

Matthew 16:26. And I don't usually this Scripture. Because sometimes you hear a Scripture, and it's a little hard. And so, if you don't give people context for it, it feels "Grinchy." So I'm going to give you the Scripture, but before you Grinch out, just let me define it, okay? Matthew 16:26:

"For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, but lose his soul?"

Wow! Inspiring, right? Whoo! You just want to get up: Yeah! [Congregation laughs] Right?

So let me put it in a different context. So what if you get everything, but you lose your connection to your soul? See, God will never take your soul. God would never do that! But we can get so busy with the things of this world that we actually lose our connections with ourselves; with our divine connection with God. We might get everything right; we might have the right job and the right car and the right spouse; the right house. And everything could look perfect, but on the inside we feel empty. I've been there! I've had everything look just right, but on the inside I wasn't fulfilled. I needed more.

And today, what I want you to see is: **As spiritual people, our first and our first primary goal always has to be spiritual. We have to decide that the most important thing we do every day is something that is**

not of this world. That is of a deeper life, of a spiritual element. And we have to decide that that's more important to us than everything else!

And sometimes our ego just wants to debate it and say, "No; no; no. Really. Really, could I just get the car and then I'll go be spiritual?" [Congregation laughs] Right? "Or can I just get the relationship or the house or the job, and then I promise ... after that, I promise I'll be spiritual."

And it just never seems to work that way! The focus first and foremost has to be for the spiritual things. And I want you to have a big life! I want you to have a great life! I want your life to be so full and rich and prosperous and loving. But I know the way -- at least in my own life -- was to put God first, and then I would get everything else.

And it's hard to believe! That if you put God first, you get everything else. Because we're just a little concerned that maybe we should just be working on these projects and do it ourselves.

But what if you have two huge goals? The first one I want your God goal. I want a spiritual goal. I want a goal that touches you and blesses you and transforms you.

You know, every Easter there's always something about Easter that just touches me. This year what touched me about Easter was the idea that Jesus' 12 disciples -- who spent about three years with him ... When they celebrated communion; when they celebrated the Last Supper, they had gone from being regular guys to being profound spiritual teachers. And they did it in three years!

I don't know how long you've been on your spiritual journey, but I've been on my spiritual journey a lot longer than three years. And I think about that, if you truly put God first in your life, how much more does God have to offer each and every one of us! But when everything else is first, then we live a life that's kind of upside down. And we worry about this, or we worry about this, or we worry about getting this or getting that instead of saying, "No; God is the focus."

"Seek ye first the kingdom and His righteousness, and then everything else will be yours."

So we have to put the focus on God! God has to be the most important thing! And then you can ask for anything else! But when we turn those upside down and we think, "Just give the job; give me the car; give me the relationship, and then I'll become more spiritual," it never works!

Brian Houston said it this way:

"You'll never come second by putting God first."

Ezra Taft Benson said this:

"When we put God first, all other things fall into their proper place or drop out of our lives. Our love of the Lord will govern the claims for our affection, the demands on our time, the interests we pursue, and the order of our priorities."

Put God first.

So here's what I'm inviting you to do today; here's your homework. I want you to have two big goals. And the first goal I want you to have is something that's just pure spiritual. Profoundly spiritual. Oneness with God; feeling a deep, deep connection with the Divine; fully living your spiritual life. That has to be first!

And then I want you to have a second goal. And the second goal can be as much fun as you can imagine! It can be you living your best life! But realize that these two goals have to be in balance. And this one [spiritual] always has to come first.

That, as a spiritual person, you need to feed your soul first. I don't care what car you drive. I don't care where your house is. I don't care what your job is. If you're not feeding your soul on a regular basis, you're going to feel empty. Because the [material] stuff only helps so much. Our soul needs God: a deep, profound relationship with the Divine.

Today, one goal that stretches your soul. That takes you deeper and is a more profound relationship with the Divine. And one goal that's just pure fun. I want you to write them down. I want you to visualize them. I want you to see them. I want you to be building your faith; I want you to believe that those are possible. And I want you to create the next level of your life through a deep, profound, spiritual goal and a goal that just makes you grin. Are you willing?

Pray with me:

And I invite you to open your mind, your heart, your soul to the activity of God. That today we put God first. We put our spiritual life first. Because we know there's no limit! There's no limit to God; there's no limit to good! That we can put God first and it transforms our lives! And we also have room to have as much fun and creativity with the rest of our life. That we were born to be spiritual people; we are spiritual people! And today, we put the Spirit first. In the name and through the power of the Living God, we give thanks. And so it is. Amen.

God bless you all! Have a great week; thank you for being here! [Congregation applauds]

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