

INSPIRED ACTION

Week #2 of a 3-Week Series, "From Impediment to Empowerment"

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Alright, now! What are we going to do tonight? I don't know; let's decide! [Congregation laughs]

So I want to start with a story ... not a joke, so don't be looking for a punchline. I don't want to disappoint you; it's not coming! Okay? There's no punchline coming! But I want to tell you a story. It's a true story.

So a speaker walked up to a podium to address a student body in a small college in South Carolina. And after looking at the audience from left to right, the speaker began by saying, *"I was born to a mother who was deaf and who could not speak. I grew up not knowing my father, and I still don't. The first job I ever had was in a cotton field."*

At this point, the audience was intrigued. Who is this person? They were really spellbound. And the speaker continued and said, *"Nothing has to remain the way it is if that's not the way we want it to be. It isn't luck, and it isn't circumstances, and it isn't being born a certain way that causes a person's future to become what it becomes."*

The speaker softly repeated, *"Nothing has to remain the way it is if that's not the way we want it to be."*

And then went on to say, *"All we have to do to change a situation that brings unhappiness or dissatisfaction is answer the question: 'How do I want this situation to be?' Then we must commit totally to personal actions that carry us there."*

I'm going to repeat that last sentence, because that's our theme for tonight: **"We must commit totally to personal actions that carry us there."**

Then a beautiful smile came across the face of this speaker, and she -- I love doing that! And she said, *"My name is Azie Taylor Morton I stand before you today as Treasurer of the United States of America."*

Wow! That's a "wow"! For those of you who don't know, Azie Taylor Morton was the first and, thus far, only African American woman to serve as U.S. Treasurer -- she served under President Carter -- and the only African American female whose signature has appeared on U.S. currency.

Her story is a powerful illustration of our theme for three weeks: last week; tonight; and next week. And that theme is about turning Impediments into empowerment, turning obstacles into opportunities.

And we're using the book, *The Obstacle is the Way*, by Ryan Holiday as our reference book. And pretend I'm holding it up right now; I forgot to bring it with me tonight. So just pretend the book is right here. [Congregation laughs] Several of you asked me about it last week. How many of you bought it? I know several of you bought it. You said you bought it as a gift; I love that! So it's a great book! Obviously, in three weeks we can't cover the whole thing, so if you are interested in digging deeper into this topic of turning impediments into empowerments, obstacles into opportunities, you might want to take a peek at that book ...

Whatever we are facing -- whatever challenge in life we might be facing -- and, you know, life is a series of challenges, let's just be honest about that! We always have a choice. Always! We can be blocked and stopped by our obstacles, or we can use them as stepping stones to express our inherent, innate, divinely implanted greatness.

The choice is entirely, fully and completely ours.

Let me say that again: **The choice is entirely, fully and completely ours.**

So I had an invitation -- if you were here last week or if you watched or listened online -- I had an invitation last week. And that was: Bring a challenge. Think of something in your life that's a challenge. Might be a big challenge; might be a little challenge. There's really no big or little; if it's a challenge, it's a challenge. So bring that and apply what we talk about here to that challenge. And let's just see what happens!

So according to Ryan Holiday, to move from impediment to empowerment, it takes three interconnected and interdependent disciplines. And they are: **PERCEPTION, ACTION AND WILL.**

Last week we talked about perception. And as the briefest of brief reviews, I want to share with you a statement from Eric Butterworth. I love the writings of Eric Butterworth! Many, many great books. And one of his best, if you ask me, is *Spiritual Economics*. It's just such a powerful book. And in *Spiritual Economics*, he wrote:

"Take a careful look at the challenges you are facing: a possible layoff; an important career decision; the inability to make ends meet on your current income. If you identify these as your 'problems,' there is a tendency to see them as static and burdensome and with a feeling of resentment and self-pity. [This] simply won't work!

However, see the challenges as 'projects,' and you tune in on a whole different flow of consciousness. You are faced with some opportunities to grow, but you feel secure in the awareness that ... the answers will unfold from within. There is a sense of lightness, of clear horizons, and of confident expectancy. It is the same so-called 'trouble,' but your attitude is different. And according to your thoughts, your faith and your feeling, it will be done unto you. [This] is a mystic teaching that is ages old, but amazingly relevant."

That summarizes what we talked about last week: the idea of the power of the perception that we bring to an obstacle. Can we look at it differently? When we do look at it differently, it becomes different.

If you want more about last week, and you weren't here or didn't listen to it, it's not too late to listen to it on the Unity website.

So tonight we're going to move into the second interconnected discipline, and that is **ACTION**. Taking action. Not just action, but **INSPIRED ACTION**. And we'll talk about what inspired action means in a moment.

And I want to bring back the words of Azie Taylor Morton that I read already. But I want to anchor them here again:

"All we have to do to change a situation that brings unhappiness or dissatisfaction is answer the question: 'How do I want this situation to be?' Then we must commit totally to personal actions that carry us there."

Now action, though ... Action is commonplace. Action, you know, can happen all the time. And sometimes our action is like chicken running around with no head. Right? We're doing this; we're doing that; we're doing this; we're doing that; we're doing that. That is not what I'm talking about tonight.

I'm talking about what I'm calling **inspired** action. And what is inspired action? Well, I think inspired action has three components. And guess what? That's what we're going to talk about tonight! The three components of inspired action.

The first one is: Inspired action comes from a higher place within us.

The second one is: Inspired action is action that is in service to our greater life.

And the third idea about inspired action is that it comes and is part of "The Process." And I'm putting that quotes. And, of course, you are now saying, "What the heck is 'The Process'?" Well, hold on; we'll get there! [Laughs] We'll get there.

But let's unpack each of those.

So the first one is: Inspired action is action that comes from a higher place within us. So you may have heard the statement -- I think somebody can correct me if I'm wrong about this! -- that, in the *Course of Miracles*, it says that there are really only two emotions: love and ... [Congregations: "Fear."] Fear. Right!

Am I right? *Course of Miracles*. Yeah; got that. Nailed it! Yeah.

There's only two: love and fear. When fear is driving our decisions ... Fear, by the way, and all of its relatives. You know, resentment; hurt; anger; frustration. Those are all relatives of fear. They all stem from the base of fear. When we're coming from fear to make a decision, hmmm. It is not going to take you where you want to go.

Now, if you've got an issue in front of you that's really scary, alright; have your momentary snit fit. Alright? Go ahead; have it! [Congregants laugh] But don't dwell; don't stay there very long. Do whatever your spiritual practices are to help you move out of that place of fear. Move out of that place of fear to a higher place: a higher place that's in you -- which is the opposite of fear -- which is the place of love. Or, said a different way, the place of the divine in you, as you and through you.

Albert Einstein said a quote that us New Thought ministers love to quote all the time, and it is:

"We cannot solve our problems with the same level of thinking we used when we created them."

Right? So let's not use fear, which made have had a hand in bringing about this situation. It may have. Or we may have called it hurt; resentment; anger; etc. Whatever. Let's not use that to try to move forward to take a committed action. Let us use love: the Divine within us. And love's relatives are clarity. Love's relatives are creativity. Love's relatives are the ability to see a bigger picture than just our little focus. Love's relatives include an excitement and enthusiasm, in fact, for the journey itself. For the journey itself!

So I want to just take a moment. We've done this already in the opening prayer and in the meditation, but I want to do it again here. Now I'm putting it in the context of taking inspired action. And that is: As you think about your challenge that you brought to the table here -- or maybe you didn't bring one yet, but you've got one now -- I want you to just think for a moment ... not think about inspired action; we'll get there. We'll get to an inspired action.

But just right now, I want you to have that issue in mind. Close your eyes just for a moment. Put your hands on your heart. See if you can't feel your heart beating. Pay such close attention that you feel your heart beating. And know that your heart is beating because "capital L" Life, itself, is living right there. And just for clarity, when I say "capital L" Life, I mean GOD is beating your heart. You are an expression of Divine Love. That is who and what each and every one of us is!

So take an in-breath and just say to yourself -- you can say it out loud if you feel so inclined! I'd love that, actually! But: *"I am an expression of Divine Love."*

[Whispers] *"I am an expression of Divine Love."*

One more time: [with congregation] *"I am an expression of Divine Love."*

Beautiful!

Come back. Open your eyes.

Before you take an action, make sure it comes from that higher place in you. That place of Divine Love. That will then be an inspired action.

But that's just the first one of our three. So let's go to number two.

Number two says: Inspired action is in service to our greater life. Well, what does that mean? Our greater life? Well, Azie Taylor Morton said we should ask the question, "*How do I want this situation to be?*"

I'm going to tweak that statement, and this is what our question this evening is going to be: How do I want my life to be? Not just the situation; how do I want my life to be? And is this action I'm contemplating in service to that life? Is it consistent with my values? Is it consistent with my purpose? Is it consistent with what means something to me? Is it consistent with my vision?

Of course, to ask that question -- or I should say, to answer that question -- you need to know what those things are! You need to know what your values are. You need to know what's important to you. You need to know what's meaningful to you. Do you have a vision for your life? That's not what this talk is about: having a vision for your life. But if you don't -- if you don't have some clarity about what you stand for in life, and what you want to bring to life -- I encourage you to do that. Take some time; spend a little time in quiet meditation and journaling. What is my life about? What am I here for? Those are big questions! But that's the greater life.

And when our actions are in service that greater life, ohhhhh. Ohhhh! It's kind of juicy. It's very juicy!

And here's a way to actually have that conversation with yourself. We're not going to do it here. We're not going to, because it would take a bit of time, and we don't have that time. But I'm going to give ... You're going to have a couple of pieces of homework, and here's one of them right here.

So here's a way to ask what might the greater life be that this thing I'm thinking about doing ... Or this action I'm thinking about taking ... Or I'm trying to figure out an action to take as I move toward resolving this challenger. How do I know? How do I know if it serves my higher life?

Well, this is what you're going to do. Sit in quiet contemplation. Have a journal. Put on some beautiful music. Imagine yourself very, very, very old. Very old. [Congregants laugh] For some of us, it's not that far. I know! I know; for some of us, it's not that far! [Congregants laugh] But it's still a long ways away! A long ways away! Long ways away! [Laughs]

But we are 100% in fine health and vitality and full mental faculties. We are sharp -- as a matter of fact -- as a tack. Alright? But you're going to imagine that elder -- that wise elder that you are -- and you're going to bring this issue to that wise elder. And you're simply going to ask: "*What would serve my life best? You're at the end of it; you're looking back. What action would serve my life best?*" And listen. And you will get an answer. I'm not saying you'll like it! [Laughs] But you will get an answer. And I'm hoping you'll like it, as well.

So that is part of your homework. And that's the second idea behind taking inspired action. That action's going to serve your greater life. And you can identify that by doing that future; it's called the "fast forward." You're going to do a "fast forward" exercise.

Ryan Holiday, the author of our theme book, said:

"When we focus on our greater life, we have a clearer head. And a clearer head makes for steadier hands. And those hands must be put to work."

Alright; so then those hands take the action.

Alright. The third idea. **The third idea of inspired action is: Inspired action is an action that is part of "The Process."** What the heck is "The Process"?

Well, this is actually -- and I am so out of my element when I say this to you! So please don't ask me to expand on this any more than what I say. It comes from a football coach. [Congregation laughs] Nick Saban -- am I saying that right? -- who is, I believe, still the head coach ... I have some football fans out there! The head coach of the University of Alabama football team. Right? Am I right about that? Good! Don't ask me anymore! And I see some people not liking him. Okay. Well, he had a good idea! [Laughs] And the way he coaches his players is what he calls "The Process." And it's different from many coaches. Many coaches don't coach their players this way. And this is what he says to his players:

"Don't think about winning the SEC Championship."

I have no idea what SEC stands for, but I'm assuming you do, right? [Congregation laughs] Does anybody know? Tell me; what does it stand for? [Congregant: "*Southeastern Conference*"] Southeastern Conference! And that makes sense, because it's University of Alabama! Got it! Thank you! Now I know. [Congregants laugh]

You know what? I just have to tell you; I looked that up; I googled it. And nowhere does it tell what that stands for, because it just assumes everybody knows. But I didn't. But I do now! Okay.

"Don't think about winning the SEC Championship. Don't even think about winning the national championship."

What? Don't football teams want to win the big -- you know, the big goal? Isn't that what they're all about? Winning the big goal? He says, "No." He says:

"Think about what you need to do in this drill; in this play; in this moment. That's the process: Let's think about what we can do today, and the task that is at hand today."

You've got a challenge in front of you. Don't focus on: "*How am I going to fix that? How am I going to all-of-a-sudden get a new job? How am I going to heal my body? How am I going to heal this relationship? I don't know how to fix this problem!*"

That's going to the end. Inspired action says, "*No; no; no; no! Don't look out there! What do I do right here, right now? What can I do right now?*"

There are so many beautiful sayings about this concept. Martin Luther King said one of them:

"Take the first step in faith. You don't have to see the whole staircase; just take the first step."

That's inspired action using "The Process." I know it seems simple. It's like, "Well, that's just too easy." Well, maybe; maybe not. But it is simple! It is simple! It's not rocket science. We don't need Einstein in the room to help us sort this out. But it's extremely, extremely powerful.

The Psalmist in Psalm 119 said -- probably inspired Martin Luther King, Jr. when the Psalmist, David, said:

"Thy word will be a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path."

But if you know the history of that ... You know, back in the day, people did wear candle-sort-of-things on their feet when they were walking at night. They really did! They're walking at night, you know, tending their sheep or whatever they're out doing at night. They're walking, and they literally have lamps on their feet. So how much ahead of you do you see if you've got lamps on your feet? About one step! That's about all you see!

But if you take that step, then what do you see? [Congregants: "*The next step.*"] Thank you! You're awake! I love it! You see your next step. And you see your next step. And you see your next step.

And even before the Psalmist said those words, Lao Tsu said -- and you know this one:

"A journey of a thousand miles starts with ..."

[Congregants: "*One step!*"]

"... one step."

That's "The Process."

So whatever is happening for you that looks like such a challenge, what is one step that you could take today? Okay; maybe tomorrow. Maybe not today. Tonight you're going to go home, and it's going to be late. But tomorrow. And actually that will be your homework! We're going to get there in a moment. Later we'll get to your homework! But I'm giving you a heads up; that's what it's going to be about.

Holiday writes in *The Obstacle is the Way*:

"Seize this moment to deploy the plan that has long sat dormant in your head. Every chemical reaction requires a catalyst. Let this [obstacle] be yours."

Let this obstacle be the catalyst for your openness to receive the infinite good of God. To receive the grace, the love, the abundant flow that is your divine birthright.

I love the title of the book: *The Obstacle is the Way*. Not the obstacle is in the way; the obstacle is the way. And we bring that in and make it the way when we perceive it differently, like we looked at last week. And then when we take inspired action, which again, as a review, comes from a higher place within us. It comes from love, not fear. Inspired action is taken in service to our greater life: our vision; our mission; our purpose; our values. And it's part of "The Process," which is what is in front of me to do right now.

So I want to end tonight with a series of affirmative statements that come out of *The Science of Mind*, which is the book written by Dr. Ernest Holmes, and is the foundational book of Science of Mind or Religious Science.

And it's really beautiful about action: divinely guided action. And I'm going to invite you to have your issue -- or we'll call it that challenge -- in mind, if you have one, as I share this. And if you would like to close your eyes, that would be great. And really be with these words. And if we could have a little background music for it, that would be lovely. Thank you!

So these are affirmative statements. So they're "I" statements, so make them your statements.

First of all, take a deep breath. [Inhales and exhales deeply] And one more thing before I start reading them. These are words of truth: spiritual truth. These are words about your higher life -- your higher self. So here we go.

"I am a center in the Divine Mind, a point of God-conscious life, truth and action. My affairs are divinely guided and guarded into right action, into correct results. Everything I do, say or think is stimulated by the Truth. There is power in this word that I speak, because it is of the Truth and it is the Truth. There is perfect and continuous right action in my life and my affairs."

Right action alone has power and right action is power and Power is God, the Living Spirit Almighty. This Spirit animates everything that I do, say or think. Ideas come to me daily and those ideas are divine ideas. They direct me and sustain me without effort. I am continuously directed. I am compelled to do the right thing at the right time ... to follow the right course at all times."

[Inhales and exhales deeply] And for this I am -- and I'm going to add, "We are" -- eternally, deeply, profoundly grateful. And so it is.

Namaste!

[Congregation whoops and applauds]

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