

DISNEY'S BIG FIVE

Final Week of the 4-Week Series, "Strategies of Successful People"

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Rev. Richard Rogers

Okay. Someone was leaving last week and, as they were leaving, they said, "*Richard, how do you define success?*" She said, "*You're doing this whole series on successful people, and every one you picked was a billionaire.*" And she said, "*Do you have to be a billionaire to be successful?*"

[Laughs] And there's times when I do say the right thing. [Congregation laughs] Right? At least it's close, right?

And I said, "*No; I think the true definition of success is happiness. And that, when we find that thing that makes us happy, we tend to also become more successful, because we're doing the thing that we love to do.*"

And I think she almost bought it. [Congregation laughs] As she was leaving last week. Right?

And so on this four-part series, I've looked at four very, very, very successful people. Oprah Winfrey: she talked to us about intention, and the power that we each have to set an intention in a moment; for our life; in an experience. To set an intention for what we want to be; what we want to create.

And then the second week we looked at Warren Buffett, who really challenged us to love what we do. And if we're not loving it, what changes do we need to make internally to love what we do?

And then last week we looked at Steve Jobs, who was very successful. And as we read last week, on his deathbed he realized that he wasn't always a very happy man. And that, to truly be happy -- to truly be successful -- we have to live a well-rounded life.

And today, we're taking on one of my personal heroes. We're taking on Walt Disney. Because Walt Disney had his own definition of success. As you know, throughout the early 1920s, Walt Disney directed short, animated movies. And in 1928, *Steamboat Willie* came out, which introduced the character of ... [Congregants shout out: "*Mickey Mouse!*"] Mickey Mouse!

And then, by 1937, the Disney studios created a series of six full-length animated features. And that was the first time that ever happened. Do you know what the first one was? [Congregant: "*Snow White!*"] *Snow White and the Seven Dwarves* was the first full-length animated movie. And then it was *Pinocchio*, *Fantasia*, *The Reluctant Dragon*, *Dumbo* and *Bambi*.

Then the next "first" for Disney was in 1954. He created "The Wonderful World of Disney," which was the second longest-running television show in history. At one point it was called "The Wonderful World of ..." Do you remember what the other name was? "The Wonderful World of Color." Remember? And that's when color TVs came out; the wonderful world of color! And it was like a big deal!

And then in 1955, he created theme parks. And theme parks ... You know, we're so used to having theme parks in our world. But in 1955, the only thing that came close to theme parks were state fairs or carnivals. And he wanted to create experiences for the whole family that really expressed family values. And in 1955, when Disneyland was created, it was a whole new thing! It was an experience like nobody had had before.

And when you look at Disney's life -- when you look at Walt Disney's life -- there's a lot of every smart people who talk about Disney's "Big Five": the five qualities that allowed Disney to be successful. And these people say it's his Purpose; Priority; People; Platform or Process. And they look at all the things that allowed Disney to be so successful.

But I think what it truly was, and why Disney had the impact on our world that he did, was probably best conveyed in a song that was recorded in 1939 and released for Pinocchio: "When You Wish Upon a Star." And the reason that song is so profound: It invites us to believe in magic again. And it makes some statements about possibilities that, for 1940 ... You know, we were just coming out of a Depression. As a country, we had just come out of a Depression, and it was an opportunity for people to believe again in the power of magic.

The song was written by Leigh Harline and Ned Washington, and it was sung in the voice of Jiminy Cricket by Cliff Edwards, who actually sang the song.

It was the opening and closing credits. And it became the anthem for Disney. It became the anthem for the Walt Disney Company, and it appeared in many films. And it was called the production "logo." The Library of Congress deemed Edwards' recording "culturally, historically significant," and inducted it into the National Recording Registry in 2009. The American film industry ranked "When You Wish Upon a Star" as the seventh of the 100 greatest film songs. There were four Disney songs that made the top 100: "Some Day My Prince Will Come." Right? Can you hear it in your head as soon as I say the title? "Some Day My Prince Will Come" from *Snow White and the Seven Dwarves*; "Beauty and the Beast" from *Beauty and the Beast*; and "Hakuna Matata" from *The Lion King*, ranked number 99.

What's interesting to me is "When You Wish Upon a Star" in Japan, Sweden, Finland, Norway and Denmark it's a Christmas song, and it has to do with the remembrance of the Star of Bethlehem.

So I want to take you into this song. Because, as many of you know, it's one of my most favorite songs. And I'm going to just read the lyrics to you and then I want to dive into them. So you ready? Here we go!

***When you wish upon a star
Makes no difference who you are
Anything your heart desires
Will come to you***

***If your heart is in your dream
No request is too extreme
When you wish upon a star
As dreamers do***

***Fate is kind
She brings to those who love
The sweet fulfillment of
Their secret longing***

***Like a bolt out of the blue
Fate steps in and sees you through
When you wish upon a star
Your dreams come true***

Now, we think of that song and we think, "Well, it's kind of cute; it's kind of childish." But I'm going to suggest tonight that it is spiritually 100% accurate. It is high spiritual teaching. It is! It is absolutely incredible! And it is, in my way of thinking, the Gospel of Disney. Because in this song is this invitation to live in a world that is greater than many of us knew. And that is the essence of truly all spiritual teachings, is to acknowledge the world that we live in, but to be willing to wish, to hope, to work, to dream, to envision a world that is greater than that. And all great teachers -- all great leaders -- invite us to do that: to rise up to a higher level. So "When You Wish Upon a Star" invites us to look above and beyond our current life experience.

In many ways -- for me, anyways -- it reminds me of The Lord's Prayer: "*On Earth as it is in heaven.*" That there's this image -- this possibility -- of what could be. And if we just keep our eyes focused on what is, we never see the true possibilities that lie when we look and take our vision higher and lift our vision to the possibilities that are above the mundane. It is a statement of faith!

When you wish upon a star ...

And then the very next line is clear that it includes us all:

Makes no difference who you are ...

I've always loved that line! Because for me, that line is the promise that every little boy and every little girl has the ability to dream a bigger dream than they've known before. That, no matter who you are and where you are, you can allow your vision to rise higher, because it makes no difference who you are. That ... [laughs] That no matter how big your vision is, it doesn't matter who you are.

And for many of us, we have wanted to believe that statement with all our heart. That it didn't matter where we came from or how much money our family had or who we are; we could actually ... It makes no difference who you are! That life -- that God -- would take us seriously, and that we could dream big dreams.

Anything your heart desires ...

And that promise -- that was a promise that was made to each and every one of us in the song. Anything your heart desires! Like, anything! Anything your heart desires! It was a promise. And if we had faith enough to believe in the promise, that we could see amazing things happen in our life. Jesus taught us that, with God, all things are possible. If you have faith the size of a mustard seed, he said, you will say to this mountain, "*Move from here to there,*" and it will be done.

***Anything your heart desires
Will come to you ...***

Have faith, boy! Have faith that no dream is too big. That no possibility is too great. That if you're willing to dream, it will come to you.

If your heart is in your dream ...

I love that! Right? This is the only caveat in the whole song. This is the caveat that says if you dream big - if you look up to your star -- your heart has to be in your dream. Now what does that mean? That you have to put your full self into it; that there has to be a commitment to the process. That you can't go halfway. You can't just kind of wish for it; you have to be willing to put your heart into that dream and be fully committed to the execution of that dream if that dream is going to become a reality.

And how many times have we had a wish or a longing or a desire and, yet, we never made the commitment to move into that dream fully and completely and watch that dream become a reality.

***If your heart is in your dream
No request is too extreme***

You know, for me, every time I walked through the gates of Disneyland, that promise became true again. You know, Walt Disney never called Disneyland Disneyland; he called it "The Magic Kingdom." For him it was a magic kingdom where all these kingdoms resided: the Future Land; the Frontier Land. All these kingdoms were kingdoms of magic where you could come and dream and experience a life that was greater. And he made sure that it was impeccably clean and that everything would work, and it would work exactly the way it was designed. And no expense was too much!

You know, one of the great memories I have of my childhood is that, every so often -- when my mother could afford it ... You know, I'm so old that, when I was a kid, Disneyland had tickets. [Congregation laughs] Anybody remember that? You had E-tickets; you had D-tickets; C-tickets; B-tickets; A-tickets. And I grew up a mile from Disneyland. I grew up a mile from Disneyland and a mile from Robert Schuller. [Congregation laughs] It was just ... It either defines you or messes with you, right? That possibility of what was. Right?

So those summer days when my mother a little extra in the budget, she would send my brother and I to Disneyland. And she would pay the \$3.50, because that's how much it cost to get in: \$3.50. I really am that old! \$3.50 to get into Disneyland. She would give us one ticket that would get us on Tom Sawyer's Island. And she would give us a bag for our lunch and a dime if we needed to call her. And she would drop us off before the park even opened outside the gate. We knew that we had to be back out at the front gate by 5:30, as my dad was coming home from work. And he would swing by and pick us up. And we would spend all day running through Tom Sawyer's Island with the threat that, if security called her, we wouldn't get to ever do it again. [Congregation laughs]

So every time she had the \$3.50 for me and the \$3.50 for my brother, she would send us to Tom Sawyer's Island. I was years older when I realized that my best day all summer long was also her best day all summer long. [Congregation laughs] Right? [Laughs] That I thought that scrimping for that \$7 for my brother and I to go to Disneyland for the day; I thought that was for us. [Congregation laughs] I think very little of it was for us; I think she wanted a day off from her boys and she knew that we couldn't get into too much trouble for \$7. That it was worth it to her every time!

***No request is too extreme
When you wish upon a star
As dreamers do***

See, this is that line where -- in our rational mind -- it's like, "*Do I want to be a dreamer? No; I want to be a doer. I want to be someone who makes things happen!*" But the reality is that, if you have a dream, it inspires you to get up every morning and be about that which you need to be about.

Fate is kind ...

See, this is this invitation in this song that, for many of us, changes our world view. If you look at all the Disney movies, there is an aspect of every Disney movie that seems very unkind and very unfair. There is! in every Disney movie, there's an aspect of the hero or the heroine who is being treated wrong by whomever, and it is very unfair. It looks so unright! And yet, there's this theme that fate is kind. That whatever is placed in front of you that looks so unfair and unright, inappropriate, bad, awful, terrible, the hero or the heroine through the course of that movie overcomes it and learns to be greater than the challenge that was placed before them.

***Fate is kind ...
She brings to those who love
The sweet fulfillment of
Their secret longing

Like a bolt out of the blue
Fate steps in and sees you through
When you wish upon a star
Your dreams come true***

So here's my question tonight: What is your tolerance for magic? I mean, really! What is your tolerance for magic? Because magic demands that we move beyond just our rational thinking and allows us to experience that which we can't always articulate. That which we don't always understand.

Like that we were created in the image and likeness of God; there's a part of us that cannot rationally understand that. To truly embrace the idea that we were all created in the image and likeness of God; that's not a rational thought! I mean, we can think it and we can write it and we can talk about it, but to truly experience the full capacity of what that statement means: It's magical! It doesn't make sense! How can that be? That each and every one of us was created in the image and likeness of God, when all too often we look so dorky! [Congregation laughs] Like, that is the challenge before us: Can I really be all that, and still be all that? It's magic!

There is magic in every soul. There is magic within you that's always been within you! That is your essence; it is your power; it is your beauty; it's what makes you so amazing. And when we remember our magic -- when we live our magic -- our life is different. It's radically different!

And you can see it in someone when they're living their magic. I mean, there's something about them that you just want to move toward them ... because you want their magic to awaken your magic! When somebody is truly living their magic, there's something so wholly wonderful about it!

Goethe said this: *"Magic is believing in yourself. If you can do that, then you can make anything happen."*

Norman Vincent Peale said it this way: *"There is real magic in enthusiasm. It spells the difference between mediocrity and accomplishment."*

So on this last very successful soul that we're talking about tonight, I want us to look at: What is your ability to own your own internal magic? What is the ability that you have to unleash all the God, all the good that has been within your soul from the beginning? That the obstacles, the hardships, the disappointments: they are not here to squelch your magic. They're actually here to release it. That there is greater magic in all of us. And those individuals that remind us of that -- help us to discover that -- actually help set us free.

"I am magical."

Will you say that with me? [With congregation]: *"I am magical."*

One more time: [with congregation] *"I am magical."*

One more time: [with congregation] *"I am magical."*

It's true! It's always been true! And I bet you could look back at the times in your life where you didn't believe that you were magical, and those were some of the lowest points in your life. And the times when you believed that you were magical, how much your soul soured in those moments. That there are those individuals who come into our world and they remind us that we were born to be magical. And it takes a great deal of faith to not think they're nuts. But the truth is: We were all created in the image and likeness of God. We were all created to be magical.

Will you pray with me?

I invite you to open your mind, your heart, your soul to the activity of God. And I want you to feel into the magic of your soul. I want you to feel that magic that is within you. And I want you to give yourself permission to let your magic come out: to live it; to express it; to be it. To be this magical expression of the Divine. To sparkle with God! To let all the goodness and light and joy and peace and abundance that is within you to shine bright. That you were created in God's image and in God's likeness. And you really

are all that. So in the name and through the power of the Living Christ, we give thanks. And so it is.
Amen.

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