

THE REST OF MY LIFE IS THE BEST OF MY LIFE

Week #2 of a 6-Week "Gratitude" Series

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Alright; you ready? I'm going to talk about transformation tonight. And I want to talk about it from the point of view of: When you look to the future, what do you see?

You know, in our Christian history, there's this story of Paul. And Paul, in the first century, his job -- or what he did -- was persecute Christians. And he would tie them up and they'd take them back to Jerusalem, and it was an awful experience. And then one day on the road of Damascus, he had a vision with this light and Jesus spoke to him. And for three days, he was blind and he was transformed in that moment. And he became one of the reasons that Christianity went worldwide. Because Jesus mainly spoke to his Jewish community; Paul spoke to the Gentiles. And his ministry was to those people who did not yet know.

And when we look at the whole story of our spiritual life, I believe it's a story of transformation. It's a story of change. It's a story of: This is who I was, and yet this is who I am today. And I believe that that story of transformation is why, ideally, religion was created. What spirituality is all about. It's the story of taking people from the way they are today -- however they're showing up in this moment -- and inviting them into a process of becoming and knowing themselves in a profoundly different way.

And that's not too big of a statement. Because all of us know ourselves in a certain way. We get used to ourselves in a certain way. We think a certain way; we act a certain way; we believe a certain way. And we get used to that way! And yet, there's these moments in our spiritual life where Spirit invites us to make pretty significant changes. And to show up in a very different way.

And sometimes we get really hooked in to being who we've always been. It feels really comfortable; you know, we're confident that, even though we're a son-of-a-gun, at least we know how to be that son-of-a-gun. Yet over and over again, Spirit is always tapping at the soul of who we are saying, *"Would you be willing to show up differently right here?"* And yet, sometimes that difference seems too much. It seems like, *"Who would I be if I was that?"*

I came across a quote from Louise Hay that says:

"I choose to make the rest of my life the best of my life."

I love this quote! And you know, when you're 20 years old, that feels like a given, right? It's like, *"I choose to make the rest of my life the best of my life!"* And there's a point along our life's journey where we no longer believe that we are going to be better in the future. Where we actually believe that our good days -- our best days -- are behind us.

And so tonight, I'm not talking to 20-year-olds. Like, that's not a stretch to think that the rest of your life is going to be the best of your life. I want to talk to all of us who have been around the block once or twice or 57 times, or however many times we've been around the block. And I want to challenge you tonight to say, *"Do you believe that the rest of your life is going to be the best of your life?"*

I did this talk up in Prescott over the weekend, and an 89-year-old woman came up to me and said, *"Well, Richard, when you're 89, we're going to see if you really believe that the rest of your life is gonna be the best of your life!"* [Congregation laughs]

Fair point! Because we're probably not going to get a 20-year-old body back, or we may not be able to do the things that we once were able to do. But what if it was possible that you could go out in the best version of you? What if the best version of you -- what if the greatest you could be -- is not related to

the age of your body, but is truly a spiritual quality, and that we could actually move through the course of our life just getting better and better.

You know, Richard Maraj's favorite affirmation: "*Every day, in every way, my life is getting better and better.*"

Together: [with congregation] "*Every day, in every way, my life is getting better and better.*"

Right? It's his favorite affirmation! And I really kind of want to entertain that idea that: What if that could be so? What if you establish the belief -- the expectation -- that, as you move through this course of your life, that you're only going to get better? More awake; more aware; more loving; more kind; more prosperous. That you're only going to get better simply because you have set up the mindset that: "*My life is only going to get better and better and better.*"

[Imitates someone talking to him:] "*Well, Richard, I've got aches; I've got pains; I've got issues!*"

[Congregation laughs] "*I have needs!*" Right?

And here I am presenting an idea. One of the things I loved about Jesus were his outrageous affirmations. When he said things like, "*You will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will be done.*" It's like, "*Pffffff.*" They would have, "*Pffffff.*" Nobody would have believed that stuff!

And there's a part of our spiritual life that we have to challenge ourselves to not accept the rational believed ideas of our time that limit us. And what if you decide tonight that the rest of your life is going to be the best of your life simply because you decide it?! That you're only going to get better and better and better, because you decided?!? This opportunity for us to create what our future looks like.

So I'm going to geek out for a minute. And I want to talk about Issac Newton. I know! And I want to talk about the three laws of motion. Because I think we need to understand that as we're looking at our future and where we go from here.

And the first law of motion says that an object will not change its motion unless a force acts upon it. Right? You've all heard this: the idea that an object in motion wants to stay in ... [Congregation: "*Motion*"]. And an object at rest wants to ... [Congregation: "*Stay at rest.*"] Stay at rest!

And we've all experienced that! Can you think of a time when you've been on the couch ...? [Congregation laughs] And you just prayed somebody would come into the room and hand you the remote so you didn't have to get up off your ... Right? Because an object at rest wants to ... [with congregation] stay at rest. And an object in motion wants to stay in motion. So that's the first law.

The second law is that ... The second law states that -- and this is fun! The second law states that force on an object is equal to mass times acceleration. It means no matter how big our mass is, the more we move it, the more force we have.

And we all know that, if we've ever had an angry person coming at us at warp speed. [Congregation laughs] Has everybody had that experience? That, when we're angry at someone or something, we tend to walk our fastest? [Congregation laughs] Because we're trying to make a point about how angry we are, and we want to have as much force coming at them as possible. And we know that an angry individual who is moving fast has more force than a quiet, calm individual. At least that's what we've believed in our ego, right? That if I'm quiet and calm, I'm not really mad! But if I'm stomping, you know I'm ticked. True? Right? That's the second law.

The third law of motion states that, when two objects interact, they apply a force on each other equal in magnitude but in opposite directions. So every action has an equal and opposite ... [Congregation: "*Reaction*"] Reaction!

Now, this is really important to know. Imagine you're on a boat. And you're tired of being on the boat. And the boat is gliding beautifully toward the dock. And you're ready to get off the boat. So you think, "Well, it's just a little step." And so you take a mighty step to the dock, but as you push off, what happens to the boat? There's an equal and opposite reaction, so the boat then slows and actually starts going backwards, because you're so powerful with your leg muscles -- that the force is so great! -- that you actually stop the boat as you step off. And the dock is no longer right there. What happens to you? Boom! Right? Right in!

And what I want you to see is the difference between you and an inanimate object. And this is what I'm getting to. This is the point. Because if you throw a rock at the force that you throw a rock, what direction is it going to go? Wherever area or spot you intended it.

Now, does the rock have a choice? No! At the level and the speed and the velocity that you throw that rock, it's only going to get slower over time, because we call that friction. Right? So if you're moving at a certain speed, friction is just going to slow you down. How many of you have experienced friction slowing you down as you intended to move faster through life? [Congregation laughs] Right? It does! Right? Okay.

So here's the point. The difference between you and a rock is that you have intelligence and you have will. And the difference is that the rock doesn't get to make a choice.

Louise Hay's comment is:

"I choose to make the rest of my life the best of my life."

And that implies that we have the power to choose. That we're not an inanimate object, just being worked on by the universe, bumping into everything around us based on the force that we go into life. But that we actually choose how we show up. And in making the choice, we actually generate power from within ourselves.

That we're not a force being acted upon, but we actually have the power within us to generate our own energy. Because we decide!

And when we decide that we want to move in any direction, we have that power through personal will and intelligence to make a decision on anywhere we choose to go. But if we don't use that power, then we become not much better than a rock! Because now we're just being acted upon by all the forces of life. And we know that if we sit too long on that couch, we may never get up again!

So we have to choose, over and over again, to create the life that we want for us.

And how do we do that?

I'd like to suggest today that the greatest way that we change is three-fold. The first one is: We have to think differently. See, we get used to thinking in our certain way. And I believe that, if we spend a certain amount of each day reading or listening to blogs and ideas that we've never held before, it actually moves us forward in our life in greater and greater ways. And so, over and over again, are you willing to think in new ways? Because that thinking actually changes the direction that you will go in your life. So the first one is thinking.

The second one is feeling. And most of us have failed to appreciate the power that we have to choose the feelings that we're feeling in our life. That we can actually be happier than we've ever been before. We can actually be more loving; more kind; more peaceful. And that we actually choose the feelings that we have. And as we change those feelings -- as we entertain new feelings -- it actually takes us in a new direction.

And third is action. What new actions are we willing to take on a regular basis that would take us in a new direction?

Now, last week I'm at the grocery store. And I have two little things. And I set them on the belt, and there's a lady in front of me. And she says to me, *"Is that all you have?"*

And I think, *"Well, that's so nice; she's going to let me go ahead. She's got a big grocery cart full of stuff."* And I said, *"Yes; that's all I have."*

And she said, *"Let me buy them for you."*

I thought, *"What?"* Like, it really stymied me! It's like ... And everything in me wanted to say, *"No, no! Thank you so much, but no; I'm going to buy my own groceries."*

And she says, *"No, no; let me buy them for you."*

And I'm like, *"Okay; last week you did this big thing on gratitude."* [Congregation laughs] *"This lady wants to buy you groceries; just suck it up and take one for the team!"* Right? [Congregation laughs] Right? *"If you're going to talk this stuff, you've got to live this stuff! And I know it's only two little things, but she wants to buy it for you ..."*

And then she says, *"Why don't you just grab them. We'll run 'em through and then you can be on your way."*

I'm thinking, *"This is just getting better and better and better!"* [Congregation laughs] Right? I've got to tell you, I walked out of that grocery store like I was the happiest I've ever been! And it was two little items! I mean, it was two little things; we were making a salad. I went in and grabbed two little things.

And she said, *"Let me get this for you."*

And I said, *"Well, thank you so much!"*

And she said, *"Don't mention it! Have a great day!"*

I thought, *"You're an angel."* [Congregation laughs] Like, *"You're a divine being, just coming to mess with my mind today."*

And I left that day and I was so touched, I went around for the rest of that day and for most of the next two days, and I was ... It cost me more money being generous to other people [congregation laughs] than it would have cost me to pay for those two little things for my salad, Right? But it was done with such incredible power!

See, we've moved into this season of gratitude. And I want you to see that the more that we give thanks, it actually changes our thinking. It changes the way we feel. It changes our actions.

And as we're going through this time, I believe that the real benefit of gratitude is profound transformation. Like, that we can't be the same cranky person we like to be sometimes, because gratitude changes us from the inside. That when we spend time every day giving thanks, right? We are changed from the inside in a deep and wonderful way.

So if you looked at your future, and you made the choice tonight that the rest of your life was going to be the best of your life -- that if you made that mindset that your life was just going to get better and better and better -- can you imagine that gratitude could make that happen? That on your last day, you could be happier, more content, more peaceful, more loving than you've ever been before? And that you would just get better and better and better at being a magnificent expression of God?

Tonight, as we move through these 40 Days of Gratitude, I'm going to challenge you again to look for things in your life -- every day over and over and over again -- that just call forth a higher level of gratitude in your life. And to be willing, over and over and over again, to hold an image that the rest of your life -- because you choose it! -- the rest of your life is going to be the best of your life! Are you willing?

Will you pray with me?

I invite you to open your mind, your heart, your soul to the activity of God. Tonight, we make a new agreement with life. That we're going to be grateful for everything. Everything! We're going to give thanks for everything. And we're going to decide tonight -- we're going to choose tonight -- that, as we move through this life experience, that the rest of our life will be the best of our life. That our life will get better and better and better simply because we decide. That we're not just going to sit on the couch; we're going to get up and we're going to give thanks. And we're going to allow the greatness of every moment to be our new reality. And so it is. Amen.

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