

# LIVING IN BETWEEN

August 31, 2022

Rev. Richard Rogers

Alright; you ready for me?

How much of your life feels unfinished? When you look at your life, and you look at all that's in your life right now, would you say that you've got a lot going on? Would you say you've got a little bit going on? Would you say that most of your stuff's done? Or you feel like, *"Man, I've got to get after it, because I've got a lot more to do!"*?

Like, some of us know that there's this book we're supposed to write, or this travel we want to take, or the accomplishments that we set out for this life. And I want to talk today about where we really are.

And the truth is that where we really are is kind of "in between." Right? We're in between in almost every level of our life. You know, many of us were raised with this idea that we were supposed to get everything done. In your house, when you were being raised, did you have to get your homework done before you could go out and play? Did you have to eat your vegetables before you got dessert?

What I want you to see is that, for most of us, we want a sense of completion. We do! We want to know [claps hands], *"It's done! I did it all! It's all done! All my homework's done; I can go out and play!"*

But where we really live is "in between." Where we really live is in the middle. That we live in the middle between our spiritual self and our human self. We live in the middle between this infinite spiritual being that God created us to be and this very finite human expression that has to eat and sleep and ... it's in that place where we have to acknowledge that we're both. That we're fully spiritual, fully made in the image and likeness of God and fully human. And we live in between those two worlds!

And sometimes people want to pretend like they're just spiritual. And like, how's that work for you? Right? But if we just live from our physical reality and we don't acknowledge that we're more than just a physical being, that doesn't work so well either! Because we have to be able to live "in between." That we live in between our past and our future. We live in between who we have been and who we feel called to be. We live in between these places

And over and over again, what I want you to see is: I believe the most well-adjusted people are those people who learn to live in the flow: in between; in the middle; in the process. And because that's where we spend most of our time: life is only getting bigger and bigger.

How many of you have ever been to a buffet? [Congregation laughs] Anybody been to one of those big old Las Vegas buffets? Like, if you've been to one of those big, old Las Vegas buffets, they are almost on the borderline of being obscene. Right? I mean, there's so much food! Like, there's not just a bowl of shrimp; there's like an island of shrimp, right? I mean, it's almost obscene, right? And they used to charge you like five bucks. And now I don't know how much it is, but it's not five bucks anymore. And they would let you in for \$5 -- or pretty close to that -- and it felt like it was a contest. Like, *"How much damage can I do for five bucks?"* Right? *"Could I actually eat my way all the way through this buffet for five bucks?"*

And what I want you to see is that life is like a buffet in Las Vegas. You're never going to eat it all! You're never going to do it all; you're never going to live it all. And those people I think are the happiest and the most adjusted learn to be in the middle. They learn to live in that place between their past and their future. They've made peace with their past; they've made peace with their future. They've made peace with their spiritual nature and their physical nature. They have found the middle ground! They're not in resistance to who they are.

Many, many times in life we want things to be settled. We want things to be done; we want to get our gold star. And the reality is that we have to learn to be in the ambiguity of life. In the middle ground. In the place where things aren't finished.

There's this great line from the Apostle Paul. And I love it because it's just so weird. Right? He says this in Romans 7:15:

*"I do not understand my own actions, for I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing that I hate."*

Now, how many of you can really identify that sometimes you don't always do the thing that you want to do. Right? That sometimes we just fall short, right? So:

*... "I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing that I hate. Now if I do what I do not want, I agree that the law is good. So then it is no longer I that do it, but the sin that dwells within me."*

I love this line! Right? Because this is a free pass! How many of you remember Flip Wilson? Remember Flip Wilson? And what he used to say: *"The devil made me do it!"* Right? And I think that this is that free pass. It's like, *"I'm not responsible for my own behavior."* Like, it's a free pass!

But I'm not sure it really works that way! I want you to really see that part of life -- and maybe for most of us, the biggest part of life -- is learning that life is bigger than we've ever been led to believe. And that there's actually no way we can get it all done.

And instead of trying to get it all done, I think that we should just be about living every moment from the highest and the best that is within us. That we have to learn how to live "in between."

In the last two months, I've had two very good friends pass. Ken Harrison passed in July; I've known him since I was 13 years old. I mean, he was my longest friend. We went into business together in high school. I mean, I have known this man forever. My other friend, Chuck, I went to college with. I was best man at this wedding. We competed together; we loved each other! He was such an important part of my life.

And I think about both of these men. And there's something about having two peers pass within two months where it's kind of made me aware that life on this planet is a *"now you see it, now you don't"* proposition. That it feels like we should have forever. And spiritually, I believe that we do have forever! But physically, it's kind of a "living in between." It's like you'd better be doing what you want to be doing. You'd better be loving who you want to be loving. And living how you want to be living. Because this moment is not going to last forever! And as we embrace that, everything in our lives gets a little easier.

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There's this poem and you may have heard it. And it's called "The Dash," and I love it. It's by Linda Ellis. And it says:

*I read of a man who stood to speak  
At the funeral of a friend\  
He referred to the dates on the tombstone  
From the beginning...to the end*

*He noted that first came the date of birth  
And spoke the following date with tears,  
But he said what mattered most of all  
Was the dash between those years*

*For that dash represents all the time  
That they spent alive on earth.  
And now only those who loved them  
Know what that little line is worth*

*For it matters not, how much we own,  
The cars...the house...the cash.  
What matters is how we live and love  
And how we spend our dash.*

*So, think about this long and hard.  
Are there things you'd like to change?  
For you never know how much time is left  
That can still be rearranged.*

*If we could just slow down enough  
To consider what's true and real  
And always try to understand  
The way other people feel.*

*And be less quick to anger  
And show appreciation more  
And love the people in our lives  
Like we've never loved before.*

*If we treat each other with respect  
And more often wear a smile,  
Remembering this special dash  
Might only last a little while*

*So, when your eulogy is being read  
With your life's actions to rehash...  
Would you be proud of the things they say  
About how you spent YOUR dash?*

See, for me, over and over again, life is incredibly big. But it's also incredibly small. My father-in-law often says that life is like a two-week vacation; at the beginning of the two weeks, it feels like you have forever. Right? And then when the first week is over, you realize, "Holy moly! I only have seven days left of vacation!" And I think that, at a certain age, we all come to that realization: that life is precious.

George Bernard Shaw said it this way: "Life is no brief candle for me. It's a sort of splendid torch which I have got a hold of for the moment, and I want to make it burn as brightly as possible before handing it on to future generations."

See, every moment we're either moving toward being more God-like, or we're moving more and more toward an ego expression.

Eckhart Tolle said, *"You can use a challenge to awaken you, or you can allow it to put you even deeper into sleep."*

So here's my request. And it is a request. My request is that you make a list of all the thoughts that tell you why you can't live fully. I want you to listen to all the arguments that you've made: *"I'm too this; I'm too that. I don't have enough this or I don't have enough that."* And I want you to make a list of all the things -- all the reasons -- that stop you from living. That check you; that cause you to be small or to play it safe.

And tonight I want you to make a decision that you're going to be bigger than those limitations. That you're going to live braver and wilder and funner and happier and more alive than ever before. Because this is it! This is it! This is it! And you get to decide in every moment how alive you want to be.

And the people in our life who are fully alive are so attractive. Because they're not just going through the motions; they're actually alive, and you can feel the "juice." And you can feel it in them.

And I want you to feel and live your own aliveness so fully -- so completely -- that you take yourself to your next level. That there's no longer an excuse or a smallness that keeps you in check. That you're willing to absolutely be the very best -- the very biggest -- version of you. To live every day as if it was your last, and to know without a doubt that you are truly being the man or woman that you came to be. For there is nothing -- nothing! -- that can stop the power of God in you when you want to express it.

So I have seven ideas that I'd like to share with you tonight on how to live in a bigger way, in a more alive way, and to be the best version of you.

The first one is: I invite you to **BE AT PEACE WITH WHO YOU ARE**. One of the things that's amazing to me is that the people who love me know I'm not perfect. And it might sound funny to you, right? But the people who love me know that, from time to time, I'm a piece of work. [Congregation laughs] Is anybody else surprised by that? [Congregation murmurs] Like, I'm amazed at that! Right? Because, in my life experience, I love the parts of me that I like. And there's some parts of me that I'm really challenged with loving.

You know, last week I did a talk, and I thought that it was great. I was pleased with it; I felt it was fabulous. And as somebody was leaving, I said something that hurt their feelings. And I didn't mean to. And my greatest gift has always been my mouth. [Congregation laughs] And my greatest burden has always been my mouth. [Congregation laughs] Right? I have watched the way my words lift people up and transform situations and heal and bless. And I have watched my mouth get me into more trouble! I spent most of my elementary school years outside the classroom. [Congregation laughs] May not be a surprise to you; was not one of my parents' greatest honors, right? Right?

So here it is: we have to make peace with who we are. And I think the elements of that are: the first one is we have to move into acceptance. We have to accept all of who we are. We have to accept our strengths and our challenges. We have to accept our gifts and our liabilities. We have to accept how we really are, not just who we wish we were.

And what goes with acceptance is forgiveness. That if we're really going to truly live fully alive, we're going to step in it from time to time. We're going to say that which we wish we didn't. We're going to act in a way that we know isn't our highest and best. And we have to be willing to forgive ourselves.

Two: **WE HAVE TO TRULY KNOW OURSELVES**. And what I mean by that is that: There are two things that I'm going to invite you to look at. What am I feeling? And what do I want? And I'd invite you to ask yourself those questions over and over and over again. What am I feeling? And what do I want? What am I feeling? And what do I want? In this situation, what am I feeling and what do I want?

Because for many of us, it can sometimes take us three days to know what we're feeling. Have you ever had that experience? Where you're not exactly sure what you're feeling? You know you're having a feeling, but you just can't name it. It's like, "Oh!" It can take us three days to realize, "Oh, I'm disappointed!" or "I'm angry!" or "I'm upset!" And it takes that long for us to become conscious of what we're feeling.

And the more that I believe that we're fully alive, the more we actually know in the moment what we're feeling and what we want. Because it's so much easier to create in the moment when we know what we're feeling and what we want.

The ancient Greeks at the Temple of Delphi had the maxim, "*Know Thyself*." Do you know there are two other maxims that were written at the Temple of Delphi? The other two were, "*Nothing to excess*," and my favorite is "*Certainty brings insanity*." [Congregation laughs] I love that! Right? How many of you have been certain about how life is going to work out, and have been terribly disappointed when it didn't work out that way? Like, the more we think we know how it's going to go, the Universe just giggles at us and says, "*It's not going to go that way at all, but you're going to be fine! It's going to be great!*"

Certainty brings insanity because we just don't know! To be fully alive, we have to embrace that, from moment to moment, we don't know what's going to happen next. But faith allows us to make the move.

Thought number three. Principle number three. Idea number three: **KEEP IT SIMPLE**. Less stuff; less games; less attitude. Less! Less is more. Leonard da Vinci said, "*Simplicity is the ultimate sophistication*." We tend to have too much: too much drama; too much unforgiveness; too much stuff; too many storage units; too much. [Congregation laughs] Make it simple.

Four: **LIVE IN THE FLOW**. There's something about those people that learn to be in the middle. They learn to be in between. That they trust the flow; they trust the flow of people and situations coming in and out of their life. They trust the moment. They trust the guidance. They trust the activity of God that's always at work. They trust that there is a flow of God into their life and that it will provide everything that they need.

Five: **TAKE TIME EVERY DAY TO PONDER AND MEDITATE**. I recently read where Sara Blakely, the CEO of Spanx, lives five minutes from her office. And she gives herself a 45-minute commute to her office every day. And on the way home, she gives herself a 45-minute commute before she gets home. She says, "*It's the only 45 minutes I have twice a day that's actually quiet*." So she says, "*I spend 45 minutes every morning getting myself ready to get to the office: think about what I want to do. I get my head right. I have time to concentrate. I have time to hear my thoughts and be with my own desires*." She said, "*I give myself 45 minutes and driving helps me get there, and I'm just quiet. And it's good*." And she said, "*And then when I leave the office at the end of the day, I give myself 45 minutes to get ready to get home: 45 minutes to unleash and let go of all that I just went through*." Over and over again, that time -- that 45 minutes in the morning and in the evening -- is the way she keeps herself on target; sane; happy; in the flow.

Six: **DO THINGS EVERY DAY THAT ARE BUILDING YOUR FUTURE**. Do things every day that are moving your life along. Don't procrastinate, but move your life forward in just little ways every day. Make the call; take the action. Do that thing that is meant for you to do that day. Because for most of us, there's usually only one or two things to truly move our life forward. There's usually only one or two things that we have to do every day to move our life forward. We tend to do much more than that. But if we really listen to God -- if we really listen and stay in the flow -- there's usually just one or two things that we have to do. And we keep our lives so busy that sometimes we miss those important one or two things.

And the seventh thing that we have to do more of is: **LAUGH**. There's this quote that says, "*Don't stop laughing because you grow old. You grow old because you stop laughing*." And that's fabulous.

You know, many years ago I did a talk on humor. And the whole room was just happy; we were laughing. We were carrying on. And you know -- which is kind of my tendency -- I had to take it one step further than that, right? Because it wasn't just fun enough; I had to go one step more. [Laughs] So you know where I'm going ... And so I said, *"If you don't think God has a sense of humor, go home today, take off all your clothes and stand in the mirror. Because that's just funny!"* [Congregation laughs]

And I thought that was hilarious! I thought that was literally one of the funniest things that came out of my mouth, like, ever! I cracked myself up with that one. I thought it was ... I honestly thought it was the funniest thing I'd ever said, right?

But apparently not everyone did. [Congregation laughs] So on Monday or Tuesday of that week I get a call from this nice lady. And she wants to tell me how inappropriate that comment was in church. That's fair. So I listened to her, and she's telling me how inappropriate it was. And nudity in church wasn't something she was ready to ... And I said, *"I wasn't really suggesting it in the middle of church, but thank you!"* [Congregation laughs] So we had this conversation a little bit.

And then she said the thing that I will just never ever forget. She said, *"If God would have wanted us naked ..."* And you know where she was going, right? And she stopped right there. She was going to say, *"... He would have made us that way."* Right? And I said, *"Would you like to finish that thought?"* [Congregation laughs] And all I heard was a click. [Congregation and Rev. Rogers laugh] Right?

I have no idea who she is; who she was. I'm not sure I ever saw her again. I'm not sure she ever came back to church, right? But the idea: If we're taking life too seriously, we're doing it wrong. This is meant to be funny. Right? It is! Absolutely every part of life is funny. And if it's not funny, we're doing it wrong.

So here's what I want. Here's your homework. I want you to take an honest at your life. Like, it's your life; you can do it or not do it. And I want you to challenge yourself to see if you know, in your heart of hearts, you're living full out. If you're just going through the motions; if you're just counting time; if you're just passing weeks or months or years, you can do that. Right?

But what if you decide that you're going to play it out hard to the end? That you're going to go all the way. That you're going to play every moment as if it was your last.

Now you might not have the energy of a 20-year-old, but you have more energy than you think. You've got more juice in you! And when we play it -- when we really play it; when we allow ourselves to really be alive -- something happens. It actually gives us more energy than it takes.

Have you ever tried to drive with your foot on your gas and on the brake at the same moment? [Congregation laughs] It's not really the way we were designed. We're designed to live to the end. Not to stop halfway through.

So tonight I want you to recommit to your dash. I want you to recommit to that little space where you get to decide how you're going to live. And no one decides that for you; it's yours! But what if you live today? And you get to tomorrow, and you decide to live again? And you don't let all the fears and the worries and the concerns actually stop you from living. You just go forward.

Can you imagine there's a bigger life out there for you? Can you imagine that you could actually play this game fully and completely for the whole time? We're alive! Sometimes we forget that that's a big deal. We're alive! It's a very big deal.

Will you pray with me?

I invite you to open your mind, your heart, your soul to the activity of God that's right here, right now. I am alive! Will you say that with me?

[With congregation]: *"I am alive!"*

So today we just give thanks. We give thanks for the life that moves through every cell and fiber of our body. We give thanks for the activity of God that awakens us every day with power and energy and love and joy. And today we decide to live: live fully; live completely; live the best version of ourselves. So in the name and through the power of the Living Christ, we give thanks. And so it is. Amen.

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