

JUST DO IT!

Final Week of the 5-Week Series, "The Five Unity Principles"

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So how many people ever had a goal, a dream, a desire -- something you really wanted -- but you didn't really do anything about it? Anybody not do work towards something they really wanted? And so how many people have ever talked yourself out of trying something that you wanted to do because you were a little scared or nervous? Anybody?

So what if you had all the courage and confidence in the world? What would you do? If you really believed in yourself, what would you try? What would you go after?

How many people know who Dan Wieden is? You don't know his name, but you will know something really amazing that he did! He passed away four months ago at the age of 77. He was the co-founder of the advertising firm, Wieden and Kennedy. And in 1988, they were engaged by a seemingly small, to them, sportswear brand company that was in the process of launching some shoes. And they hired them to do the advertising to try and really get business kind of going and booming.

And he was looking for a slogan. And so he was watching the news and he saw this guy who was on death row. And they put him in the electric chair and they asked him, "*Do you have any last words?*" And his last words were, "*Let's do it.*" And for some reason that struck Dan in a weird kind of way. It intrigued more than anything else that -- in that context of what was about to happen to him and what was going on -- the fact that he would say, "*Let's do it.*"

And so he ended up changing it to, "*Just do it!*" And, of course, you know the company was Nike and the shoe brand was Air Jordans. Jordan had already been with the company for four years and sales were going great. But after ... And they didn't even want the slogan! They didn't want it, and they said they finally gave in to him. And then when they put it in, it exploded! I mean, the trajectory of the company was outrageous success worldwide. "*Just do it!*" absolutely transformed the company from about \$33 million to \$37 billion over the course of the years.

And there was something about "*Just do it!*" that really related to everyone everywhere ... no matter what age; whether you were athletic or not; whatever your goals or dreams. Something about the words, "*Just do it!*" hit a profound chord and message to everyone. A kind of message is like, "*Have courage! And go after it! Believe in yourself! Take a try; do your very best in it! Give it your all! Take action ... Just do it!*"

I want you to think about your life. And if I were to say, "*Just do it!*", I'll bet there's something in your life that relates to. Something in your life where that is relevant; that is calling you to do and take action in some area.

You know, that advertising company could have chosen the slogan, "*Take action!*" [Congregation laughs] But somehow the impact and the power of "*Just do it!*" kind of rings a bell. It's timeless; it's already been 35 years! I would say in another hundred years it will still be as relevant and meaningful and important to all of us. Because the bottom line is: If you want something in life, you've got to take action. If you want something in life, you've got to do it. You've got to practice. You've got to apply what you know. And you've got to be willing to work; you've got to work if you want to have what you want!

Kind of reminds me of this female student. This university student. She walks into her professor's office and she smiles at him and says, "*I would do anything to get an A.*" And flicks her hair back [congregation laughs] and gazes meaningfully into his eyes, smiles again and says, "*And I mean anything.*" And then the

professor says, "You would do anything?" And she says, "Anything." And so the professor smiles and returns the meaningful gaze. He leans forward towards her and softens his voice and said, "Would you be willing to STUDY?" [Congregation laughs]

Alright. [Laughs] [Congregation applauds] I appreciate the applause; thank you!

So this is the last week of our five-week series looking at the five foundational principles of Unity. It is a framework that we use to understand ourselves and our relationship with God in a greater way, and to utilize the tools and the practices to navigate through the challenges of life to create a greater level of joy and peace and love and happiness and fulfillment in all areas for ourselves. The previous four foundational principles are:

Number #1: **There is only one presence and one power in the universe and in our lives, and that is God, and God is good and only good.** It means that God is the one Source, the one Creator out of which all is created. And we can't say, "The devil made me do it!" We have been given free will! Sometimes we can turn away from the light and we also have the power to turn back towards the light. But we live and move and have our very being in this essence and power of love of God.

And the second one is that: **We're an individualized expression of God.** We have been all created in the image and likeness of God. That light of God -- that Christ light and potential -- resides in each and every one of us.

The third is that: **Prayer and meditation is the way that we connect and access that power of God, that Christ power.**

The fourth is that: **Our words and thoughts -- the power of our mind -- have a creative power that helps shape our lives and all of our experiences in life.**

Today the fifth one is that: **It's not enough to just know these things; you've got to put them into practice.** You have to take action and demonstrate them to truly experience the fullness of all this spiritual power and possibilities for ourselves.

So after the Gospels ... what's the first Book after the Gospels? [Some congregants shout, "Acts!"] The Book of Acts! So after the Gospels, the first thing is Acts; it's about action. You learn it, but then it's about putting it into practice. Bringing it to life and applying it.

The Apostle Paul in the Book of Philippians said, "*Whatever you have heard from me or learned from me or seen in me, put it into practice and the peace of God will be with you.*"

Let me ask you a question to consider: Are you happy with how you are showing up in life? How you're showing up in your work? How you're showing up in your relationship? How you're showing up in stressful and challenging times? How you're showing up as a friend? How you're showing up in terms of your own self-care?

In all situations, are you really practicing your awareness that there really is one presence and power, and we live and have our being in that Spirit and presence of God? I mean, are you really practicing the awareness that you are a child of God? That you are created in the image and likeness, and that potential of the Divine is in you? I mean, are you living the awareness and the practice of daily meditation and tapping into the goodness and abundance of God? Are you aware that you are a creator, and your words and thoughts matter? Every single word you speak has an influence in the creation of our lives! And finally, are you aware that we've got to put it all into practice? I mean, how well are you practicing these five spiritual principles in your life?

How many people know that you could probably show up in a more positive, prayerful and persistent way in your life? Okay; about half of us. That's good! [Congregation laughs]

So one of my favorite Scriptures is from the Book of James. And it's Chapter 1, Verse 22-25. And here's what it says. It says, *"Do not merely listen to the Word and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says! Anyone who listens to the Word but does not do what it says is like a person who looks at his face in the mirror and, after looking at himself, walks away and immediately forgets what he looks like."* [Congregation laughs]

And so, what it's saying is that, if we aren't living up to our potential -- if we aren't practicing these spiritual tools -- then we don't even know who we are. We have forgotten who we are as incredible divine beings; incredible, powerful children of God.

He goes on to say, *"But whoever looks intently into the perfect Law that gives freedom and continues in it, not forgetting what they have heard, but doing it, they will be blessed in their doing it."*

I love in the Book of James when it says, *"Faith without works is dead."* Because usually our faith and our attitude, our mindset and beliefs, affect what our actions are. But if we aren't doing the actions, it means that we really don't have as much strength and faith and belief as we say we do or think we do or want to.

The fifth principle I would say is, ***"JUST DO IT!"*** It is to take action. It's to demonstrate; to embody and express these spiritual powers and tools. And if I were to say, *"Just do it!"* another thing it brings to mind is: It needs to live with intention. Or, as Thoreau said, live deliberately; consciously; purposefully.

Here are five practices that we can do to "Just do it!" and to live with greater intention.

The first one is to **PRACTICE POSITIVITY**. You know, the power of positive thinking has been known and espoused for hundreds of years. We know that the power of positive thinking affects our health; it affects our level of happiness; and our ability to handle the challenges of life. Practicing positivity helps us see the good. It helps us call forth the best in ourselves; in others; and all areas of life.

And yet, most of us have a hard time practicing that level of optimism and positivity on a regular basis. And here's the reason why, explained beautifully in a Netflix documentary that I just saw. Anybody ... It's Jonah Hill. You know the actor, Jonah Hill? He did a documentary about his therapist, Phil Stutz, and the impact of the spiritual tools and practices that he had on his life. And he wanted to share it with everybody. Anybody see *Stutz*? It's really kind of cool; very, very cool show.

And here's one of the things that he said. He said, *"There are three aspects of reality that no one can avoid: pain, uncertainty and constant work."* That every one of us has some pain in some way, whether it's from the loss of a loved one; some wound or some struggle; or feeling shame or unworthiness. Some level of hurt. Every one of us experiences uncertainty. Dealing with the unknown where we feel anxiety or feel a bit of fear; where we worry. And the other one is that life takes work! Whatever you do ... Taking care of your health takes work. Nurturing your relationship takes work. Getting better in your career takes work. There isn't anything you do ... Your spiritual life! It all takes constant work!

And to practice positivity means: We need to accept that's a part of the experience and realize it's just a part of the human condition, and that we can still rise above. We can still use these tools to overcome; to handle; to manage; and to progress beyond them.

Jesus put this same principle in these words. He said, *"In this life there will be trials and tribulations, but be of good cheer. For I have overcome the world."*

And practicing positivity says that I accept that there are challenges. I accept that things are going to go wrong and not always go my way. But I can have a positive attitude; but I can be of good cheer. I can have an attitude that is hopeful and optimistic. I can feel a sense of gratitude and joyfulness. Practicing positivity is about believing in ourselves and the spiritual power and tools within us to be able to apply them to handle anything in our lives, and to overcome them to something even greater. And practicing positivity helps us to not succumb to fear and worry and whining and complaining, like we can sometimes get into.

So I want you to think about your attitude towards life, as it is now. And do you think there's room for improvement in handling things more positively? You know, I would say one of the more important things of practicing positivity is having a desire to move forward. A desire to improve. A desire to get better. A desire to succeed. Because then it helps us to not get stuck in the pain; in the uncertainty; and in the work that needs to be done. When we get to that place of moving forward, it gets us in a place of positivity; of progress; and betterment.

So first thing for us to do is to practice positivity.

Second one is: **PRACTICE PLANNING**. I talked a little bit about planning a couple of weeks ago. Planning is a reflection of what's important to us. It's what valuable; what's a priority; what is our purpose and our direction. It's about knowing that we're here; that we want to get there; and the steps to support us in getting there.

I know there are many things that I say and that we've all said are important to us, but we have no plan. And when we have no plan, it reduces our chances of succeeding in it. I know every one of us says we want to eat a well-balanced diet, and sometimes with no plan, our level of success is not as high. We all say prayer is so important to us, but without a plan, our consistency in doing it is not as effective.

Planning helps keep us focused and motivated and intentional on what we're doing and, especially, why we are doing it. And so it's an important thing! Whether it is losing weight; increasing your income; improving your relationship or your health or your career, planning is a powerful and important tool for us to utilize.

So I have a pretty good diet, but I've been trying to clean it up and tighten it up. And I find that when I don't think about it, I can grab something that's not so healthy, but that's convenient. So I've been trying meal planning. I've been trying a specific breakfast; a specific lunch. And knowing what I want to plan has been helping. It's only been two days, but I'm telling you ... [Laughs along with congregation] So far, so good! [Laughs]

You know, one of the things about success in life is that: We're always looking for the quick fix; the grand slam home run. We're looking for it to just turn around; click our heels and it's done. But the truth is: True success is about consistent daily work over time. That's developing good, important habits. And it begins to change our lives in great ways. It creates the foundation of success and tends to be more sturdy and more dependable and more long-term. Actions over time equals progress. And if we want to have the progress, we need the planning. Planning really is a great help.

John F. Kennedy once said, "*Things don't just happen; they are made to happen.*" And it is when our intentions, our actions and definitely having a plan. If you want to live a life of intention, make a plan. If you want to achieve your desires, make a plan. Whatever's a priority or goal in your life, make a plan. Practice planning is the way that we put these principles into motion and attract greater things.

The third one is to **PRACTICE LISTENING**. So how good of a listener would you say you are? On a scale of 1 to 10? I would say most of us are probably not as good as we think. How well do you listen to your

own gut? How often do you listen to your own heart? Your own intuition? Sometimes we are really not that great to listening to ourselves; listening to others; and especially listening to God.

One of the things we begin to do is just to introduce silence in our lives in some way. Maybe turning off the TV; turning off the music. Maybe sitting outside and just listening or sitting in our home and just listening. We need to learn how to listen better.

And it's just a part of being human. Jesus said, "*You have ears, but do not hear.*" And the reason he's saying that is because there's a lot of wisdom and insights we could get that we miss out on by not listening.

I would bet every person in this room's life would get better if we focused and practiced listening. Quieting ourselves and just tuning in to hear the wisdom and the brilliance and the genius that is within us, but also to connect in our relationships. To know where each other are at. To have more compassion. To exchange greater closeness and intimacy just by listening.

Paul Tillich was a 1930s and '40s theologian, and he said that the first law of love is to listen. And that we could take the first and second commandments and swap it out, and it would still mean the same. The first commandment is to love God with all your heart, mind, soul and strength. And second is to love others as ourselves. We could flip that and it would be equally true if we said to listen to God with all your heart, mind, soul and strength, and to listen to others as we listen to ourselves. That would be equally a powerful practice of love, is to listen.

The kingdom of God is within us. The question is: Are we tuning in to listen; to tap in to that deeper level of insight and wisdom and understanding? Maybe we should make it a practice this week to turn our listening up a notch as we listen to ourselves; as we listen to our loved ones; and practice listening to God.

The fourth one is to **PRACTICE "SQUEEZING THE JUICE OUT."** Phil Stutz says that we must practice squeezing the juice out of the lemon. And the analogy I think it brings to mind is, "*If life gives you lemons, make lemonade.*" But his squeezing the juice out is to say: to squeeze the meaning and value out of those situations, particularly the ones that aren't so fun or enjoyable. The things that go wrong; the challenge; the hurt; the pain. It is in those things -- we want to shut it down, gloss over it, and get on to the next thing or get away from it. And he's saying there's a gift there; there's meaning and value there. There's teaching and wisdom and insights to grow us and expand our awareness; our consciousness; our faith; our level of strength. But we need to squeeze the meaning and the juice out of it.

That means we have to put the intention on the work and be open and allow ourselves to go there. He said one of the most important ways to go there is: Whatever that situation is where you feel stuck or struggling, write about it. Just keep writing and writing and writing about it. And not only will your emotions come out, and you'll get a greater awareness, but insights will begin to come. That it is a powerful and important thing to squeeze the juice out and get the meaning. But it needs processing. To just think about it, it requires that writing to help us.

Phil spoke about his own Parkinson's, and how debilitating it has been to him. That it takes so much for him just to get out of bed every morning. How it affects his activities and his lifestyle. How it affects his own mindset and attitude. And how he can go to self-pity and negativity and pain. And yet, he said, even though it feels like it's crushing him, that he has gained his greatest insight in being able to help people. And greater levels of understanding and wisdom has come to him and has helped him be as great as he is.

I don't believe that's the only way for us to learn, but I do believe it is often the challenges in life that bring out the best in us. But the fact is: We've got to go in and get it. We've got to squeeze it out. We've got to be willing to process; to feel it; to do the work; to pay attention; and see what it has to teach.

But it will come forth! Our soul wants to expand. And there is a teaching, and the teaching will come out if we're willing to engage in the process. Life is always trying to teach us.

This week in the "Aging with Intention" class, we did a thing called "Life Review Therapy." And it is actually therapy. And studies have been done that seniors who write down in categories what childhood was like; adolescence; young adulthood; and what their senior years were like. What was challenging; what we learned from; what we struggled with; what was healing. Just reviewing it and writing it down, they actually feel lighter; greater peace; and a greater sense of self-acceptance. That is squeezing the juice out of the lemon! It is getting more meaning and value.

And people come to terms more with death and dying when they're able to review all of the experiences of their life ... and especially accepting themselves.

So if you want to express the fullness of our divinity, it requires us to look at our humanity, and walk through it and squeeze. Because there is meaning; there are lessons and gifts for us if we're willing to go there.

And the last one is to **PRACTICE FUN AND LAUGHTER**. You know, life is meant to be fun. It's meant to be a joyful, wonderful experience. Scripture says, *"To enter the kingdom, you must become as a child."* We've got to reconnect with our childlike nature and feel joyful and happy and playful and silly.

In Job 8 it says, *"He will fill your mouths with laughter and your lips with shouts of joy."* And it's important! I mean, when's the last time you had a good belly laugh? When's the last time you laughed at yourself or saw the humor in your life?

You know, I just got back from Jamaica, and when I was there, I was in the water seven or eight days in a row. I mean, I was just playing and having a good time in the water! The fascinating thing is: with human beings, you give them a ball to throw around -- especially men -- and we are entertained for hours! [Congregation laughs] It is incredible! I had so much fun tossing a ball back and around in the water!

And then afterwards, there was a kids' water area. You know those kids' water play areas and there's like a bucket up top? And it fills, fills and then it tilts? I was under it several times! [Congregation laughs] *"Come on, kid; get away from me; I'm playin'."* [Laughs] No; kids weren't around at the time. Anyway. But it was me and my brother-in-law and my brother, and we had such a good time. My childlike joy just came out!

And it doesn't take a lot! I mean, what are the things you like to do that bring you joy? Maybe it's dancing; maybe it's going to a comedy club; or playing cards with friends that's an absolute riot every single time. My sister just went bowling; I didn't know she went bowling, but she said she had a blast! I mean, what is it? Reading a funny book? What would make you laugh? What would bring you greater joy? It's such an important time to take time to enjoy and to laugh.

You remember in *City Slickers* when he was going to go to the dude ranch? And his wife said, *"Go and find your smile."* And in all his crazy adventures and silliness that happened, when he got back nothing changed: same wife, same job. But everything changed, because he found his smile. He found his sense of joy and laughter again.

Maybe we can find some laughter right now! Here we go ... [Laughs with congregation] Did you think I'd miss the opportunity? Here we go.

A local bar was sure that their bartender was the strongest man in town. And they offered a standing thousand-dollar bet. And the bartender would squeeze a lemon and all the juice into a glass and then hand the lemon to the patron. And if anyone could squeeze even one more drop out of that lemon, they would win the money. And everybody tried! Firemen, longshoremen, weightlifters ... but nobody could do it.

One day a scrawny little guy wearing thick glasses and a polyester suit came in and in a squeaky voice said, "*I'd like to try.*" Well after the laughter died down, the bartender said, "*Okay.*" And he grabbed the lemon, squeezed everything into it -- all the juice out of it. And then he handed the wrinkled remains of the rind to the little man. And the little man grabbed it and, after people were looking, they were absolutely in awe. Not only did he create one drop out; he squeezed six extra drops out!

They couldn't believe it! They gave him the money and they were astounded. They said, "*What did you do for a living? Are you a lumberjack? I mean, what do you do? Do you do karate? You do kung fu?*"

He said, "*No. I work with the IRS.*" [Congregation laughs] It's tax time! It's a relevant joke! [Congregation applauds]

Unity is often referred to as "the church of positive, practical Christianity." Positive because we don't teach original sin; we teach the original blessing: that God created us in God's image and likeness. We are all brothers and sisters -- all children of God. And we are here to live life and live it more abundantly. And the second one is -- the practical Christianity -- is that we focus on the practices of Jesus. Of how to live and embody his teachings. Not worshipping; practicing. He said, "Follow me." Follow me! Live and practice these things!

Practice positivity. Practice planning. Practice listening. Practice squeezing the juice and the meaning. And practice fun and laughter.

Dan Weiden said, "*Excellence is not a formula; excellence is a grand experiment. It ain't mathematics; it's jazz.*" And so life is about playing and planning, but it's also about experimenting and trying new things. Being willing to improvise, but always keep trying. Always keep making new music. Always listen to that rhythm that is in you and express it fully and deeply and brightly.

Jesus said three things about us that are powerful. He said, "*You are the light of the world.*" He said, "*You shall do the things that I have done, and greater things than these.*" And he said, "*Let your light shine!*" And what he was saying is: This is you. This is your potential. This is what's possible. Just do it

God bless you! [Congregation applauds]

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