

WHAT IF GODZILLA JUST WANTED A HUG?

February 12, 2023

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So how many people have ever had someone in your life who just rubbed you the wrong way? Anybody ever have ...? [Congregation laughs] How many people ever know someone who was just hard to love, or even hard to like? Anyone? And how many people have ever had someone that irritates you so much it takes all your strength to get along with them and not just go off on them? Anybody have that experience?

You know, one of the facts and realities of life is that we all have difficult people to deal with. Every one of us has some people in our lives that kind of get on our nerves or that challenge us. People whose behavior or attitudes are negative or adversarial or maybe even toxic. And it's just tough to relate! It's just tough to deal; tough to be around.

And whether it's an individual or individuals in our workplace; or in our family; or neighbors; or parents; or politicians; or a store clerk; or your mechanic; or strangers, every one of us deals and faces dealing with difficult individuals.

I saw a quote and it said, "*Human beings are the most difficult people in the world.*" [Congregation laughs]

So I want you to think of somebody who is difficult in your life. See their face in your mind's eye. And I would guess it was probably fairly easy to think of a person, have their picture come up in your mind. What is a little bit harder for all of us is to realize that we are someone else's difficult person. [Congregation laughs] That it is our picture they're holding in their minds when they think of what a difficult person is. And I know you're all thinking, "*No, no; Richard, that is not me! That could not be me! I am not a difficult person!*"

Here's a little quiz to see if you are. You might be a difficult person if people salute you and you're not in the military. [Congregation laughs] You might be a difficult person if telemarketers hang up on you. [Congregation laughs] You might be a difficult person when you walk into a business and they always coincidentally happen to be closing at that exact time. [Congregation titters] You know that you might be a difficult person if your family moves and forgets to tell you where. [Laughs along with congregation] Last one: You might be a difficult person if your mystery person Christmas gift is a muzzle. [Laughs with congregation] That's not a good sign!

So today's talk is entitled, "What If Godzilla Just Wanted a Hug?" [Congregation laughs] I think it's a fabulous title! I'd love to take credit for it, but it is the title of a book a friend of mine -- a great guy named Darrell Fusaro -- wrote. And not only is he an author, but he is also an artist. He had an exhibit with Andy Warhol. He was a Hollywood stunt coordinator. He was a producer of a local edition of CNN and also a co-host of the Unity online radio show, "The Funniest Thing." He and his partner, Ed, are both hilarious! They're creative and they're passionate about spiritual principles.

I've been on their show I think at least three times. And I was at a Regional Conference. They live in LA and I was in Palm Desert, and they drove up from LA so that we could actually meet in person. And he gave me a copy of *What If Godzilla Just Wanted a Hug*.

So when you think of Godzilla, clearly the image is not warm and fuzzy. It's a fire-breathing, destroying, heartless monster. Kind of the bad guy; the villain. And so that whole idea of Godzilla is kind of a negative tone and negative influence. I think there's a TV show that spins off called "Bridezilla." [Congregation laughs] I'm not sure what that's about! But it's really not a positive connotation.

So we all have Godzillas; we all have difficult people in our life. People who we think of as monsters or bad, or at least they irritate us and make life challenging and difficult. And so: What if Godzilla wanted a hug? Anybody ever had a time in your life where you just needed a hug? You just wanted a hug? You just wanted some tenderness? Some kindness? Some empathy? You just wanted to be understood; you just wanted some encouragement and support?

"So what if Godzilla just wanted a hug?" really means: What if the difficult people in our lives -- the people that challenge us and frustrate us, even the people who hurt us -- what if they just wanted a hug? What if they just wanted some support and some care? What if underneath that behavior is someone who's kind of lonely and struggling and in pain who just want some acceptance? Who just want some kindness?

I mean, we could almost use as an example when we see someone lash out at some level, we think, *"They are just needing a hug."* That they just need some support and care.

James Dillet Freeman, who was the director of the Unity ministerial program and who wrote the "Prayer for Protection" that we do every Sunday ... When I was in seminary, I was at a lecture and somebody asked him, *"What have you learned in all your years?"* And he said, *"The one thing I've learned and come to realize is that every single person is hurting in some way."* Every person is dealing with some wound and every person is in need or desires a healing of some kind and on some level.

And the thing that they are seeking for that healing -- more than anything else -- is love. Because love is a healer! Love soothes and it comforts; it reassures; it uplifts; it nurtures; it transforms. Love is the thing that we all seek more than anything else, whether we realize it or not. The amazing thing about the power of love is that it comes in many different forms: to be cared for; to be seen; to be acknowledged; to be understood and accepted; to be affirmed; to be valued; to be cherished; to belong; to be respected. I mean, we have all kinds of ways that we all yearn for a level of love.

We all want love, but sometimes we hurt so badly we don't know how to ask for love. We don't know how to ask for help. We don't know how to ask for a hug or the support we need. Sometimes we are so wounded, we have a very difficult time receiving, accepting and letting in the very love that we actually want!

Sometimes we're so wounded and hurt that we sometimes have a hard time expressing or sharing our love with the very people that we love and want to share it with.

We are told that we are created in the image and likeness of God, and God is love. So it means we are made in love. That we are here to love. And we want love, but sometimes we're so stuck in the pain that sometimes, not only do we not let it in, sometimes we push love away. And sometimes we even hurt the people who we want to love us and that we love.

And so sometimes we lash out. Sometimes we act out. Sometimes we withdraw or turn to all kinds of other things to try to find that love that we're seeking. When parents hear a child say things like, *"I hate you! I hate you! I hate you!"*, parents can easily think, *"Well, I know they don't mean that. You're just hearting and don't know how to express or how to say what it is that they need."* But when we, as adults, act out -- and we do! -- there are still those childlike reactions that we all have in us. We, among ourselves, have a harder time or the capacity or the patience. We would rather reject and judge and label rather than going to that place of that level of understanding with others when they act out.

You know, most of the hurtful behaviors and actions are from people who are hurting. I read an article and it says we are doing one of two things: we are either expressing love or we're crying out for love in whatever form that might be. What if Godzilla just wanted some love?!? Just wanted some compassion?

Wanted some tenderness? And that is true! We don't always know how to ask for it; we don't always know how to express it or show it.

So right now I just want to share with you Darrell's Godzilla -- Darrell's most difficult person, most difficult relationship -- and that was with his mom. And he reflects back to his fourth-grade assembly. And he was in this performance they had, and it was like a basketball court with a stage, with chairs there. I think we all remember what that was like. And so he was in this play, and everybody's asking, *"Is your mom coming?"* Everybody's saying, *"Yeah; my mom's coming"* *"My mom's coming."* He said, *"My mom's coming,"* but secretly he's praying, *"Oh, God, Jesus, please don't mom come! Please don't let mom come!"* [Congregation laughs]

And so as the play began, his mom wasn't there. And he was tormented by the thought any moment she might come in. So she was late and he was like, *"Oh, maybe I got away with it! Maybe she won't come."* And then the door from the back slammed, everybody turned, and there's his mom in a tight sweater, capri pants and high heels and says, *"Hi, baby!"* And even then he kept thinking, *"Please don't let anyone think she's my mom! Please don't let anyone think she's my mom!"* And then she says, *"Hi, Darrell! Hi, Darrell!"* [Congregation moans]

He said he was absolutely humiliated and embarrassed. And it was just one of many events where he felt humiliated and embarrassed about his mom. He would drink and get drunk, and he wrote this. He said, *"Seeing your mother drunk is one thing. But being forced to dance with your drunk mother is a discomfort like no other!"*

There were other incidents/clashes between his mom and his dad. And one of the worst ones had her running and leaving the house -- running out naked at night out of the house -- with the father, Darrell and his younger brother chasing her down the street. And then, like a block away, the dad tackled her and helped her with a terrycloth robe to put on. And unfortunately for Darrell, it was on the front lawn of the girl from school that he had a crush on. [Congregation moans] And he said he could still see her standing there pressed up against the screen door with her parents just staring at them on their front lawn, fighting and struggling as a family.

And he said all of his friends that lived in the area -- all the house lights were coming on to see what all the commotion was. They were flashing like paparazzi lightbulbs, just to see what was going on. And he said it was like a walk of shame as they went back home. And wishing that he and his little brother were absolutely invisible.

Shortly after that, the parents go divorced. And an interesting thing is: Shortly after she left, Darrell discovered the poker money that his father would hide. And he had lots of rolls of quarters. So he decided to take a little bit of the money. But he didn't buy anything for himself. What he bought was Starburst fruit chews ... is that what they're called? Starburst? Because all the other kids ... He didn't even like it, but he was so in need of a hug and some attention. He was struggling with his mom not being there. And so he'd steal this money, buy these fruit chews, and he'd be tossing it out and kids like him. And he just felt like he was valued. He felt like he was important.

But after a while of stealing this money, the father started noticing the money was missing. So he said, *"Darrell, I've got to ask you something."* And he thought, *"Oh, no! The gig is up!"* And he said, *"Has your mom been around? Do you think your mom maybe did this?"* He said, *"Yeah."* And so he blamed his mom. And it was the beginning of blaming his mom for any and everything: every bit of irresponsible, bad behavior. Every time something went wrong, he blamed his mom for everything. And he kept blaming her.

And then it got even worse, because at 18, his father died. And he felt even more alone. And he was filled with self-pity. He was filled with blame. And then all of his bad choices just hit rock bottom, and he was court-martialed at 24. And his military sergeant said, *"Darrell, you are at a choice point in your life. You've either got to change, or you're going to die."* And it was in that moment that he began to work on himself and look at himself and realize that he was the worst enemy. That he was the one who had full responsibility for his own choices.

And one of those choices -- to improve himself and his life -- was to reach out and connect with his mom. Not to blame her; just to reconnect with her. And she was so happy that he reached out. And even though he didn't feel as close or connected, he was consistently connecting with her; consistently having interactions with her.

And so 15 years later -- so his life is progressing along -- he gets this guilty feeling about stealing the quarters and blaming her. And so he's thinking to himself, *"Well, look; things are good with me and my mom now; my life's doing well. I don't need to tell her."* But it kept eating away at him.

And so the interesting thing is... So he went to the mom and said, *"Mom, I just need to tell you something."* He said, *"Those quarters; I stole them. I know Dad blamed you and got angry with you, but I'm the one who did it."* And then she said, *"Isn't it funny the silly things we do when we're young?"* And she gave him so much understanding that it just opened his heart. And he just really began to melt, and realized that his mom really wasn't so bad. That those things weren't as bad and he put so much blame on her.

And then she said her worst regret was leaving. That was the hardest thing for her to do. And she said, *"I hate that you and your brother feel like I didn't love you. But I absolutely loved you!"* And she was going through tough stuff, and she explained all of that stuff.

And then he said, *"Mom, I knew you loved us and I know you still do. And I love you."*

And then his heart opened even more, because he started remembering her teaching him how to tie his shoes; how to color. And that she kept saying to him, *"Darrell, you're going to do good stuff one day! Darrell, you're going to be a great success!"*

And then he realized that he had become all of those many things. Exactly what his mom said! And he came to terms to realize his imperfect mom was the perfect mom for him. Who taught him what he needed to learn to become who he needed to become.

So right now I just want to share with you three things that we can do to deal with, in the best way, the difficult relationships and difficult people in our lives. Or the three ways how to give our Godzilla a hug. So here we go!

The first one is to **SHOW GRACE AND COMPASSION**. How many people saw the movie, *Godzilla vs. Kong*? Aw, somebody did? I'm amazed! Okay; cool! So the director of that movie was Adam Wingard. And here's a perspective about Godzilla in the movie that he had. He said, *"True, the very tall lizard creature has no qualms about killing thousands of people in one fell swoop by breathing fire on them. And yes, he has historically climbed skyscrapers and squashed cars with his bare feet. But has anyone ever stopped to consider that maybe Godzilla wasn't such a bad guy?"* According to Wingard, Godzilla might just be misunderstood. [Congregation laughs]

So what if the person that we blame -- the difficult person in our life, our Godzilla -- wasn't as bad as we thought? What if that person might just be misunderstood? What if we don't have all of the information about what's going on in them and in their lives? About their fears, about their insecurities or shame? Maybe they just did the best they could at that time.

You know, Wingard ... If he could consider giving Godzilla the benefit of the doubt and understanding and grace and compassion, could we -- with that difficult person in our lives -- be willing to give some consideration? Some benefit of the doubt? Some grace and some compassion?

The Bible tells us to love our enemies and to forgive those who wrong us. And the truth is that we could not have love, forgiveness or happiness without grace and compassion. It is absolutely vital. And that is what we are called to do! When it says that "*Love is patient; love is kind. And love keeps no records of evil. Love sees the best.*", it is saying that, even when someone doesn't show up in their best, that we can still see the best in them. We can express the grace of God and our compassion for them. The fact is that, when someone hurts us or offends us, we have a choice. We can actually turn to blame or judgement or hatred and resentment, or we can believe and see the best in them. You know, maybe they were just having a tough day and didn't realize that they were rude. Maybe they are going through some difficulty, and maybe it has absolutely nothing to do with us.

And in the same way, when we mess up -- when we make mistakes, or say or do something hurtful -- don't we want some compassion? Don't we want some grace? Or some understanding? The fact is: No one's perfect! And we need to have some room for some understanding. To allow ourselves to be human.

Martin Luther King said, "*If we all went by the rule 'an eye for an eye,' we'd all end up being blind!*" That it does not help. The truth is: If we want to have love and peace and happiness in our lives, we absolutely must show grace, understanding and compassion.

In my prosperity class, we do a little prosperity exercise, and it's called "Just Like Me." So we're going to do it right now. I want you to hold in your mind's eye again somebody that that you've had difficulty with or are having with. And we're going to do a little meditation.

So everybody close your eyes; take a deep breath. And I just want you to realize that this person makes mistakes ... just like me. This person can be a jerk ... just like me. This person has been hurt ... just like me. This person gets angry ... just like me. This person worries ... just like me. This person wants to be happy ... just like me. This person deserves a second chance ... just like me. This person wants to be loved ... just like me.

Take a deep breath. Feel your heart open with compassion, grace and understanding. And one more: This person is a child of God ... just like me. Deep breath. And just open your eyes.

You want peace. You want happiness. If you want to make the best of any difficult relationship, it begins by a willingness to show grace and compassion.

The second thing is to **CHOOSE LEARNING AND HEALING**. Nobody likes difficult people; nobody likes difficult relationships. And often when we think of a difficult person, we often think they're the ones to blame. They're the reason for my frustration. They're preventing me from peace of happiness or success. They are a roadblock and an obstacle in my life.

And I'd bet -- if I were to give the power to you to just snap your fingers and eliminate the difficult people and difficult relationships in your life -- we would all take it. But I would suggest that, if we do, we would also lose the spiritual growth and the wisdom and the insights. And working through that difficult relationship, our capacity to expand our ability to love and to forgive and to have compassion and express kindness. And we would lose our ability to become the full, amazing spiritual being that we came here to be. And we would lose the ability to love at the depth of love that we are called to live.

I would say that learning to deal with difficult people is one of the most important life skills that there is! I really believe that the quality of our relationships is the quality of our lives! You know, we draw people

into our lives that are there to stretch us, to teach us and to help us. And I love that Darrell said that his mom was the perfect mom for him to help him be who he was. And the reason is: Because he was willing to look at himself. He was willing to work on himself. He was willing to help heal himself.

And sometimes we need to look at that relationship and ask ourselves a question: What is this person and this relationship calling me to be better at? Or greater at? What is the lesson or message I'm meant to learn from that person? Or what is the thing I'm meant to heal or let go or change? Or to express or to create and bring forth? What boundaries am I supposed to set? What ways is it teaching me to say, "Yes!" and step up, or what ways is it calling me to say, "No"?

And an important thing in this process of learning and healing is to take it to God in prayer with the same intention and awareness that Joseph had when he said, "*God means this for good.*" God means this for good! That this relationship -- this difficult person -- is meant for my highest good.

You know, I love that Darrell went from lost and self-pitying and blaming to choosing to help empower himself. He chose to learn. He chose to heal. And it helped him advance in a great and wonderful way.

So whoever that difficult person is, the question is: Are you willing to choose to not go to blame, but to choose to learn? And to choose to heal so you can advance and move forward to greater things?

And the final one is to **SEND PEACE AND LOVE**. You know, that sounds so soft and You know, send peace; send love. It sounds kind of soft and maybe not very helpful. But it's powerful and amazing!

One of the examples that I had in my life that I really was astounded at was this lady named Sharon. When I was a minister in North Carolina, she came into my office and she was crying. She was really upset. And she shared a story of the fact that she and her husband and her family moved from Pennsylvania to a cul-de-sac right near the church. And when they got there on the date of closing, there was a mix-up, and the closing date was a month later. So they had all their trucks and all their stuff from Pennsylvania; had to put it all in storage and then rent a hotel.

And there was a conflict with her and the agent. And there was a lot of anger and tension. And the worst part was that the agent was also her next-door neighbor! [Congregation groans] And so there was tension! And all the other neighbors took the agent's side, because they knew her the longest. And so Sharon felt like she not only got a raw deal, but she was getting the cold shoulder every day.

She said she hated this, and she can't move now; the husband just got this job and they have to stay there. And she was so upset.

And so I said to her that, "*We're going to do a little experiment. We're going to send her blessings of peace and love and abundance. We're just going to hold that for her.*" And I said, "*Every time you get out of your house, just sincerely wave and smile. Send them peace and love.*" And I said, "*Even if you don't get responses, just keep at it.*" I said, "*This is going to work! It's going to take some time, but it'll work! And I'll bet you one day she'll even send you a Christmas card! But we've got to be dedicated to this.*"

So she and I would do this. She and I would do this over and over again. After a couple of months, they had an issue with their water pressure in their cul-de-sac. And Sharon was one of these "write a letter of complaint" and was absolutely like a dog with a bone when you set her on something. Well amazingly, all of her work got their pressure even higher than what it was before! She became like a cul-de-sac hero! {Congregation laughs} People started waving at her. And slowly over time, the situation was over, and she became a part of the community; felt a sense of belonging; and felt happier than she ever had. And she ended up getting a Christmas card eventually! [Congregation laughs]

And it doesn't seem like a big deal, but it is a huge thing. What comes from our minds, what comes from our hearts -- sending it out there -- 100% makes a difference in here [points to his heart] and opens a path to create a healing and a transformation in the difficult relationship, itself.

Charles Fillmore, the co-founder of Unity, said that the quality of our lives and the amount of prosperity we experience are directly related to the thoughts that we hold toward other people. That when we hold thoughts of peace and love, peace and love come back to us. When we send out thoughts of abundance and joy, abundance and joy comes back.

Darrell tells a story about when he worked at that CNN studio. His manager was kind of out to get him; they didn't get along very well at all. And he was thinking, *"This isn't going to last!"* But then he remembered: If you bless something, it will bless you.

So he kept blessing the lady. Sending peace and love. Whatever he prayed for himself, he also prayed for her. And he said in less than a month, this lady came and they started having conversations and interactions. They enjoyed working well together until he left a few years later. He said the transformation was amazing.

This sending peace, sending love, sending blessings absolutely makes a difference! It leaves out any room for blame and hatred and negativity. And just sending that peace and blessings out makes us feel a sense of peace and joy in us. But sending it out to the universe helps that relationship, but I think it helps, just life itself. Sending good energy out there.

And I think it's important to send peace and love and blessings to ourselves! To be compassionate to ourselves. In addition to learning, we need our own love and our own support. And a hug from us!

You know, it's interesting that the image of the Godzilla in the different movies that were made have gone from terrible villain to anti-hero to sometimes even being a good guy. Ever had a relationship that didn't start out so good? That was difficult; maybe you didn't like the person? But over time, you got to know them, and you became even closer, and became even friends.

I really believe that, in those difficult relationships, if we were to exercise showing care, compassion and understanding; that if we were willing to learn and heal within ourselves; and if we're willing to send peace and love, it can transform those into something greater and something even better.

It doesn't mean you're going to have lunch and be pals, but when you express grace and compassion; healing for ourselves; and sending love, it will at least bring peace in here [points to heart], and peace to ourselves.

Whether we realize it or not -- whatever we do for a living, it doesn't matter. Every single one of us are in the people business. That every single one of us: the quality of our lives is reflected in the quality of our relationships.

You know, we all know difficult people are a sign that we're hurting a certain way. That we're not feeling a sense of love. And so knowing that truth, would you be willing to give love to the difficult people in your life? Because what if Godzilla just wanted a hug?

God bless you all! [Congregation applauds]