

## GRATITUDE FOR CURIOSITY, THE ENGINE OF ACHIEVEMENT

Week #4 of a 6-Week "Gratitude" Series

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Alright; you ready? Do you consider yourself a curious person? Four ... Six ... [Congregation laughs] Right? How many of you really do consider yourself a curious person? Most! Most!

So what defines a curious person? [Congregant: "*They ask questions.*"] They ask questions! Right? Pretty obvious, right? Curious people tend to ask questions. And some of the questions we ask are not always easy to answer.

You know, one of the stories I've heard over and over again in serving in this ministry is the story of a congregant who went to their minister, their pastor, their priest, their nun, their Sunday school teacher, and asked them a question that apparently they were not supposed to ask. Did you ever have that experience? Where you asked somebody in charge a question, and that question was outside the realm of apparently what you were supposed to ask?

And there's one of two ways that's greeted. Either you walk away feeling kind of shamed that you knew you kind of crossed the line, even though you didn't see the line; you were just being curious, right? And sometimes [laughs] you were told, "*Thank you very much, but you ask way too many questions; maybe this isn't your right and perfect place.*" Right? And it seems to be those two places.

And what I love about this place is: You get to ask all the questions you want. And what I love about my job is that I'm not required to answer them! [Congregation laughs] Right? Because part of your spiritual journey is asking questions and taking that into prayer, and really asking God. Because my answer may or may or not be helpful to you.

Now, I'm often [laughs] ... No, I'm regularly ... I'm usually willing to give you my input, because "*Blah, blah, blah*" ... That's what I do, right? [Congregation laughs] But it still may not be your answer! And part of our spiritual journey is to be in tough questions until we find the answer that fits for us. Because curious people are willing to be in a question long enough until the Holy Spirit -- until God -- can reveal an answer that really makes sense for us today.

See, I find that we live in a time right now where the easy, superficial questions and the easy, superficial answers are no longer helpful. You know, we've kind of burned through all of them. And if we're going to move ourselves and our planet forward, we need to be willing to entertain the tougher questions. And sometimes those tougher questions -- we don't instantly have an answer. But we need to be willing to stay in the question long enough until that answer will be revealed.

Matthew 7 says, "*Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened. For every of you who asks will receive.*"

And I love that! "*Every one of you who asks will receive, and he who seeks will find; and he who knocks it will be opened.*"

And the promise is that, if you're willing to ask God question, ask Life, ask the Universe -- whatever word choice you want to place in it ... If you're willing to be in that question long enough, and if you're truly desiring a greater level of wisdom and understanding, that will be forthcoming! But you actually have to be curious enough to stay in the question until you get the answer that's right for you.

(The Scripture) goes on: "*For what man of you, if his son asks him for bread, would give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, would give him a serpent? If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give good things for those who ask him?*"

Like, what are you curious about? And would you willingly ask the Infinite to guide you and direct you in a deeper understanding -- a deeper relationship -- to the most important issues in your life?

*"I am curious."*

Will you say that with me?

[With congregation:] *"I am curious."*

Alright. *Ted Lasso*; anybody watch *Ted Lasso*? Alright; I've got a *Ted Lasso* for you. Go ahead.

[Plays *Ted Lasso* video clip]

**Ted Lasso:** *Mae, what do I need to win?*

**Mae:** *Two triple 20's and a bull's eye.*

**Rupert Mannion:** [Laughs] *Good luck, Ted*

**Lasso:** *Mm. You know, Rupert, guys have underestimated me my entire life. And for years, I never understood why. It used to really bother me. But then one day I was driving my little boy to school and I saw this quote by Walt Whitman and it was painted on the wall there. It said, "Be curious, not judgmental." I like that.*

[Lasso throws a dart and gets a triple 20; patrons cheer]

**Lasso:** *So I get back in my car and I'm driving to work, and all of a sudden it hits me. All them fellas that used to belittle me, not a single one of them were curious. You know, they thought they had everything all figured out. So they judged everything, and they judged everyone. And I realized that their underestimating me ... [exhales] who I was had nothing to do with it. [Chuckles] 'Cause if they were curious, they would've asked questions. You know? Questions like, "Have you played a lot of darts, Ted?"*

[Lasso throws a second dart and gets another triple 20; patrons cheer and shout]

**Lasso:** *To which I would've answered, "Yes, sir. Every Sunday afternoon at a sports bar with my father, from age ten 'til I was 16, when he passed away."*

[Lasso looks hard at Mannion]

**Lasso:** *Barbecue sauce!*

[Lasso throws a third dart and gets a bull's eye; patrons cheer loudly]

So even if you're not a *Ted Lasso* fan, you got the message, right?

The idea here is that there's this concept that's called a fixed learner or a ... It's called a growth mindset or a fixed mindset. And a fixed mindset: there's this underlying belief that we should already know. And so what happens when you're in the fixed mindset is that you won't ask, because you're afraid that, by asking, it's going to reveal that you don't know. And there's a level of shame in that in the fixed mindset.

In the growth mindset, everything is fair game. Every question is fair game. Because in the growth mindset there's no shame that holds you back from asking the questions that you want or need or like to know. And in that process, we're able to grow and expand at an unbelievable rate, because there's nothing that's keep us from being in a better question.

The whole Socratic Method is a process of questions as an instructional tool. Started by Socrates back in the 4th century BCE, where he would ask people questions. And the idea was that the questions challenged the assumptions. They exposed contradictions and they led to new knowledge and new

wisdom simply by asking the question. Because when you ask a question -- a good question -- it actually is the underlying belief that, deep within you, is a better answer. But if we never have anybody asking us deeper questions, then we just live at the superficial level of information. And we never go deeper; we never really explore what it is that we really believe.

So what's the question that your soul wants to ask life? What's the question that would change everything?

You know, there's two questions that I want to talk about tonight. The first question is the one I don't think is ever helpful. And the second one is what I believe is always helpful.

The question that I believe is never truly helpful is this whole idea: "*Why me?*" Right? And we only ask that question, usually, when something bad has happened to us. Like, I've never heard a lottery winner on TV say -- you know, after they've just won \$80 zillion -- I've never heard a lottery winner say, "*Why me? Why me, Lord? Why me?*" [Congregation laughs] Right?

Because when good things are happening to us, nobody cares. When bad things are happening, we might ask, "*Why me?*" And it's the idea that we could reverse-engineer it. That we could actually find out why the bad thing happened and try to go a different direction.

But the reality is: That question -- "*Why me?*" -- is never, ever, ever helpful. It doesn't take us to a deeper understanding. It just takes us and allows us to live in our level of feeling like a victim to life.

The question that I think is much more powerful and much more interesting is to ask, "*How?*" The moment we ask the Infinite, "*How?*" -- the moment we ask God, "*How?*" -- what I believe is: the way begins to appear. If you ask God how to live a more loving life, or how to live in greater peace, or how to know greater joy, or how to live in greater abundance ... the moment you ask Life, "*How,*" I believe that the Universe begins a process of revealing the "how" to you. But if we never ask "*How?*" we actually just stay in the level of life that we're in.

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So if you could ask one "*How?*" question to Life -- one "*How?*" to God, to the Infinite -- what is the "*How?*" question you would ask? What is the thing that you would like Life to reveal to you? What is the question? How to live a more enjoyable life? How could I afford this trip? Or how could I create the life

of my dreams? Or how could I find the person that I long for? Or how do I create a profoundly loving relationship? When we ask the "How?" question, God knows exactly how to get us there.

You know, Noah St. John wrote -- in a book called *Affirmations* -- he said that the moment you ask a question, the infinite wisdom of the Universe begins to reveal itself. He said, "*Your mind has what we might call an automatic search function, which means that when you ask yourself a question, your mind automatically begins to search for an answer ... You create your life in one of two ways: by the statements you say to yourself and others, or by the questions that you ask yourself.*"

So when you think about your life right now -- right where you are with exactly what's going on -- what is the question that you'd like to present to the Universe? If you could anything -- if you could ask anything! -- what is the question that you would like to have the Universe reveal to you? Because it makes all the difference in the world!

See, I believe that every soul comes into this world and asks a very basic question. And for each one of us it's different. But I believe that every soul comes into the world with a question on their heart that they want to know coming into this life experience. So some of us: We want to know love. Or some of us want to experience creativity. Or some of us want to know deep peace. All of us come into this world with a question that we want Life -- we want this Life -- to answer for us.

And when we actually know our soul's question, life gets so much easier, because we literally know what we're about.

And most people never really become conscious of their question. They go through life, but they really never dive deep enough to know what's the question that is written in their soul that they want to discover. And sometimes -- and I want to share this with you -- sometimes the question that we think we're asking from Life literally isn't our question! It's actually maybe our parents' question or somebody else's question. And because they didn't answer their question, we take on that question, think it's our question.

And the reason that I know this; it's because it happened to me. The question that I began my life thinking was my question was, "**Can I get it right?**" Now, that's an interesting question to ask! Because if your job is to get everything right, you work really, really hard to get it right.

How many of you have ever tried to get everything right? [Congregation laughs] What was your success ratio? [Congregation laughs and murmurs] Mine was pretty good! But as soon as I got it right, there was always something that would go ... [Congregation: "*Wrong!*"] Wrong! Right? Or if somebody came up to me -- and it didn't matter if it was my life, didn't matter if it was me, didn't matter if it was my family, the church; it didn't matter what it was -- I was committed to getting it all right. And trying to get it all right at the same time. [Congregation laughs] Right? I wanted across-the board -- I wanted everything -- to be right.

So if somebody would come up to me and say, "*Well, this is wrong,*" oh, my gosh! [Congregation laughs] They got my undivided attention! Because they just pointed out that I wasn't doing it ... [Congregation: "*Right.*"] Right!

And I lived the first half of my life literally exhausted trying to get it right. And then I realized: That was never my question! My question was: "**Can I be loved even when it's not right?**" And for me, that's a very different question! Because that question made everything in my life exponentially easier!

Because what I realized: That some people would love me, even when I wasn't right. Even when the experience wasn't right. Or even when the moment wasn't right. Or even when there was a problem in the church, or whatever it was ... There were people who would love me, even when it wasn't right! And

that I could literally learn to love myself, even when my zipper was down. [Congregation laughs uproariously] Because everybody knows: As a public speaker, you don't do it with your zipper down! [Congregation laughs] Because it's not ... [Congregation: "Right!"] Right! [Congregation laughs]

[Laughs] Right? And what's so interesting is: I realized how hard I was working for the wrong thing.

Today I want you to know what your question is. I do! I want you to know the question that your soul came to answer. Do you want to know great peace? Great love? Great joy? Great creativity? Did you come to experience all the beauty in life? Did you come to experience just profound relationship? What is the question that your soul came to answer?

But I also want you wise enough to understand when you're asking a question that's not your question. And would you be willing to allow that question to grow and evolve so that your soul actually answers the very reason that you came? Because your soul came here for something that I don't want you to miss. And I believe that the more we allow ourselves to be curious, the greater our life becomes.

For many of us, we were only allowed to be so curious before it was too much. We were too much. But the truth is: The deeper and the more broad you allow your curiosity to dive, the more God will reveal to you. Because God is Infinite Wisdom. And that Infinite Wisdom wants to be shared with us all.

Will you pray with me?

I invite you to open your mind, your heart, your soul to a deeper question in your life. To a deeper level of truth. To know a greater relationship with the Infinite, with the Divine. To ask the question that your heart and your soul has always wanted to know.

Today, we give thanks for good questions. And the Infinite Wisdom all around us that can answer any sincere question with a level of wisdom that is life-changing. And so it is. Amen.

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