

AS A CHILD OF GOD

Week #1 of a 2-Week Series on "Fillmore Prayers"

Wednesday, Jan. 3, 2024

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Okay, you ready? On Facebook today, I put out a question, because I want to hear from you. And I wanted to kind of get a feeling of what people were thinking about themselves as we move into this new year.

And the question that I asked people was: How do you define yourself? At your core, how do you define yourself? And it was great! I mean, I got almost 80 people who responded how they defined themselves. And, you know, I gave people kind of a starter idea: Do you define yourself as a good person? Do you define yourself as a spiritual person? As a child of God? Do you define yourself that you're all that, right? [Congregants laugh] Like, how do you define yourself?

Because I believe that it is so important, especially at the beginning of a year, that we start at the most basic idea and the most fundamental aspect of who you are. And that you have the ability – and, in fact, you're really the only one that gets to do this! Other people may try to define you. Other people may actually want to define you. But you're the only one that actually gets to decide over and over and over again who you are.

And what you believe about yourself -- how you see yourself -- defines the life experience you have!

You know, it's always interesting when people come into these spiritual ideas. Because, in the beginning of when they first arrive into this spiritual idea and the spiritual framework, their idea of who they are is fairly limited. They sometimes see themselves as very broken. And they begin to hear positive ideas that they can begin to hold for themselves. And it begins to change not only the way they view themselves, but it begins to change every possibility for their life! That it's hard to live a successful life when you believe that you're profoundly broken. Because even if you attain great success, but believe that you're inherently broken, you don't really get to enjoy it too much. Because you can't run from yourself.

And many of us -- and for most of our lives, probably, for most of us -- we have been taught that New Year's is a time to make New Year's resolutions. And we have our list. And, *"I'm gonna do this, and I'm gonna do this, and I'm gonna be skinnier than I've ever been before, and I'm gonna have more money" ...* And, you know, it's all the things that are supposed to look, so everything looks good, and it's all the outer things. things. And I think having goals is fabulous. I have goals, right?

But I really want us to start this year not with the outer, but with the inner. I want us to start by you defining who you're going to be this year. Because I believe that, if you start with that piece, everything becomes so much easier. And for many of us, we're trying to lay outer changes on the same old person that we've been over and over again, and it just doesn't work! Like you can buff up that old car, but it's still going to be an old car!

But with, because we are spiritual beings, we have an infinite potential on how we get to show up. You literally get to decide how happy, how joyous, how loving, how successful you get to be. You get to define yourself, and as you define yourself, it is done on to you.

And nobody can literally do that for you. There are people that love you; that would like you to have a better image of yourself; that have wanted you to think more highly of yourself; to believe more in yourself. But until you do it, it doesn't matter. It doesn't count. It just rolls off, because it can't stick until you decide who you are.

So this year, who do you want to be? If you could be anything -- if you could be any level of love or joy or peace or abundance -- who would you decide you would be?

You know, the opening statement that we used tonight is, "*I am who I say I am.*" That's not an egotistical statement; it's just spiritually true! That literally you are who you say you are! Because when you say you are whatever it is you say you are, it actually creates the vibration that creates the experience of that. So the moment you change who you say you are, the entire universe responds to you differently, because the vibration you are putting out into the world is no longer the old vibration that you were holding. That you vibrated a certain level and, as you change who you are -- as you name yourself in a different way -- it actually causes the entire universe to treat you differently.

Have you ever felt like there's a "kick me" sign on the back of your soul? And that, no matter what's going on in your life, somehow the entire universe knows that you're wearing a "kick me" sign, right? And it's so frustrating. When you're doing all these things, you're working hard, and you're believing, and you're getting your stuff together, but you're carrying this "kick me" sign on the back of you, and you wonder why life is harder than it needs to be.

So who do you want to be? Let's start with that this year. Let's start with you deciding who you're going to be and how you're going to show up. Because you get to decide!

Most of us never really decide how loving we're going to be, or how kind we're going to be, or how generous we're going to be. We don't really decide that; we actually just respond to what the world does around us. So if people are loving to us, we tend to be more loving. If people are generous with us, we tend to be more generous. If people are inspiring to us, we tend to be more inspired. And it tends to be from the outside in instead of the inside out.

But if you got to define yourself -- if this year you got to decide literally who you want to be: how you show up, day in and day out, over and over and over again, 362 days left ... Is this leap year? Is it? [Congregant: "yes."] It is - 364 days then remaining, you get to actually define how many days and how many ways and how you get to show up over and over again.

"I am who I say I am."

Together: [with congregation] *"I am who I say I am."*

Now, most of us have a positive image of ourselves at some level. Is that true? Would you say that you have a positive image of you at some level? Now, what also tends to be true is that most of us also have a negative belief about ourselves that we are in resistance to. So not only do we think that we're a spiritual being or a child of God, or fabulous in every way, but we also at some level -- on those off days, on those bad days, on those hard days -- believe, "*You know, at the core level, I just believe I'm broken.*" Or, "*I just believe I'm just not quite good enough.*" Or, "*Nothing really ever works out for me.*"

And this year I want you to be able to hold both. Because so many times, we resist those negative beliefs that we have about ourselves, and the resistance only creates more energy in that negative belief. So I want you to have a very high positive belief in yourself, but I also want you to be willing to be conscious -- when you have a negative belief about yourself -- so that you can do something with it that is different than just pretending it's not there.

You know, I do a lot of coaching when I'm not here. And one of the things that I've found is that the more successful people are, the more their negative belief about themselves grows at the same level of their belief in their own success. And you think, "*Why would that be?*" Like, if you're all that, if you're that successful, why would your negative belief about yourself ...? And literally with every person I've ever worked with, at a deep level -- if they will tell me the whole truth -- they say, "*If people really knew*

who I was, it wouldn't work anymore." And there's this ability that we have to deny what we believe is wrong with us, thinking that if we resist it, it will go away. It just doesn't! And the way that we manage it is just wrong. So I'm gonna help, right? Here we go.

So I want you to see that I want you to have a very high belief in yourself. And when your negative beliefs about yourself show up -- because they will! -- I want you to have at least one special person in your life that you can say to them, *"Would you love me if you knew how rotten I felt about myself right now?"* [Congregants laugh]

Because what happens once you say it out loud, and get loved right there, all the energy of the negativity in that belief is instantly dissipated and it's gone! It literally goes away! But if you hide the shame that you feel about your brokenness, it actually empowers the sense of brokenness. And no matter how successful you become, you still carry that deep, dark fear that you're not all that.

I believe that we each have to have one or two or three people that we can tell our deepest, darkest fears to who will simply say, *"I love you right there."*

Now, what most people will do for you when you say your deepest, darkest fear is they will say, *"Oh, you're not that!"* Not helpful. Like they will try to give you 20 reasons why you're not that. Not helpful! Because you know the 20 reasons. You know the 20 good things you've done. And yet, you still carry that wound! Because we have never been unconditionally loved in our darkest place. And it's only in that level of love that it actually allows that wound to be fully healed. It's exorcised. The energy actually dissipates; it dissolves. And so, having a debate of your goodness isn't helpful.

How many of you have ever had a friend who, when you say how bad you're feeling will give you a laundry list of why you shouldn't feel that way? And yet, you still feel that way! The only thing that takes the pain away is when you feel unconditionally loved that you are that way. If you knew I was a rotten scoundrel; if you knew that I was a terrible person; if you knew that I was inadequate; if you knew all my darkest fears about myself, right? And somebody comes up to me and says, *"Richard, I love you right there."* And you go, *"No, you don't. I don't love me right there."* And they say, *"Richard, I love you right there."*

There's a moment when you look into their eyes and you believe it. And in that moment, your shame is gone. There's no more resistance. You're no longer fighting the darkness. It's all just love and light, and you're set free.

So this year I want you to define yourself. But I also don't want you to run from your darkest fears. I want you to have the courage to say them out loud to people who love you, and see if -- with their love -- you can finally burst that bubble and allow all that shame and ugliness to be instantly just erased. And you can be set free.

Now when I was an undergrad, I was a business major. And at the time, I was a pretty serious guy. Right? I had a I was working on an undergraduate degree in business administration. I had I was working on a minor in economics. And those are really aren't really a lot of laugh riot courses, right? But we had to take a certain amount of humanities. And I hated them. I took an art class; ugh. I took an acting class; ugh. Right? It was just awful; it was awful, right? But I had to take them; I had to take my humanities.

And then one -- I think it was either my second to last semester or my last semester -- I had to take one more humanities class. And I found in humanities, they had philosophy. I like philosophy! But they had a course called Logic. I loved it. I took a symbolic logic class. And logic is the ability to study correct reasoning. It includes both formal and informal logic. Formal logic is the science of deduction and valid inference or logical truths. And you kind of build a story: *"If this is true, then this would be true; then this would be true; then this would be true."* And it's fabulous! I loved it! I mean, I thrived on it!

And I realized, as I was preparing this talk, that I actually use that course every week as I'm preparing my talks. That the course that was kind of a throwaway course my last semester in college was actually the one I use the most! If you ask me about economics principles, I can kind of vaguely remember it. But if you ask me about making a logical assertion, and how you build on that, I actually do that every week!

Now you may say, "*Richard, you actually think your talks are logical assertions?*" [Congregants laugh] Right? And sometimes people come up to me and say, "*Well, Richard, you got a little wild out there. You stretched that one a little far.*"

But, you know, if this is going to work, you actually have to see the logic of the house that I'm trying to build. Like, if I'm just going tangent after tangent after tangent, you're going, "*That was just a hot mess!*" Right? Because there's nothing that kind of holds it together. Well, that's my attempt anyway.

So I want us to look tonight -- and I'm going to make another jump to one of our co-founders. And I believe that she was an amazing soul: Myrtle Fillmore, co-founder of Unity. In 1886, she and Charles Fillmore, her husband and also the co-founder of Unity, they went to a lecture by E .B. Weeks. And in that lecture, she had a transformative moment. And in that moment, she had experienced tuberculosis. And depending on who you talk to, she was either kind of at the end of her life experience with tuberculosis. But tuberculosis was definitely impacting her life.

And she went to this lecture by this teacher, Dr. E .B. Weeks, and she heard a statement that changed her life. And then for the next two years after that lecture, she went into her time of prayer and meditation, and it was based on an affirmation that she heard that night.

And I'm going to give you two versions of it, but both are pretty close. Right? Because there is some discussion which version of it, but let's go to it. Oh, there it is. Can you see it? Is it up behind me? Here; there it is. Is it there?

Okay. Let's read it together: [with congregation] **"I am a child of God; therefore I do not inherit sickness."**

Now, let's do the next one. Little different.

[With congregation]: **"As a child of God, I do not inherit sickness."**

Now, both of those are relatively the same statement, correct? Great. Now, what I want you to see is the logic in those statements. Because she makes a logical assertion that I think is so fundamentally important that we understand.

So let's go back to the first one. Can we go back? There you go.

As a child of God and, therefore -- as I'm a child of God -- I do not inherit sickness. That is a logical assertion that she's making. Do you see that? Anytime you hear the word "therefore," it is a logical assertion. They're making a statement -- "I'm a child of God" -- and therefore means that what I link to that ... if this is true, then this has to be true. Because if this is true, this allows for that.

And so she names herself. She's nearly 40 years old, and she names herself -- maybe for the first time ever -- as a child of God. And because she names herself, it gives her the power to overcome something that she's had her whole life. In fact, her mother died of TB; her grandmother died of TB; and it was assumed that she was going to die of TB.

But she heard a lecture and, in that lecture, she had the realization that there was a possibility. Not just a possibility! That if she claimed a new name for herself as a child of God, therefore -- as a child of God -- she would not inherit what she thought she had inherited from her mother and her grandmother. And

she realized that -- as a child of God -- she would only inherit the perfection of God! And within two years, it changed her life.

And I want you to see how important this is that, this year, you decide to name yourself. That, in the act of naming yourself, there is a logical assertion that you can make about the rest of your life. See, if you make the logical assertion that you're a no good son-of-a-gun ... The logical assertion from that, or what you can extrapolate from that, is that life is going to be a hot mess. Right? That's just a logical belief! That, if you're broken, your life is going to be broken. If you're no good, your life is going to be no good.

But when you decide who you're going to be and make a logical assertion that -- as a child of God, as a spiritual being, as a good person -- therefore I _____. You get to decide! As a child of God, therefore -- I'm a child of God 00 therefore, I choose an abundant life. As a child of God, I choose -- or as a child of God, I claim -- joy and peace.

And I want you to see this over and over again: that that logical assertion ... By naming ourselves actually creates the possibility of a life that we didn't believe before that assertion was even possible. But once you name yourself ... How many of you remember in the Old Testament that one of the things that Adam got to do was name everything? Adam got the role of naming everything!

And what I want you to see is that, as a spiritual being, you have the power to name everything! And once you name it -- once you name it -- you have the power to create a higher level of good in any area of your life! That, if you want to begin to claim yourself as a child of God -- *"And as a child of God, therefore I claim peace love, joy, abundance in every way"* -- you have that ability! You have that ability, because you're naming yourself!

See, that's what I want us to begin today. I want you to make a logical assertion by naming yourself and then linking to that name the life that you want that can only be possible if you're a spiritual being or a child of God or created in the image and likeness of God. That, once you name yourself, everything becomes possible.

But if you try to get there from a broken sense of self, there's no logical path. Because if I'm profoundly broken, all I can create is a broken life. If I'm profoundly wounded, then all I can create is a wounded life. If I'm no good, I can't create goodness. If I'm unlovable, I can't create loving relationships.

But when you change your nature; when you change your name; when you change the way you see yourself, it is not illogical to call forth any of the qualities and attributes of God. But it starts by the way you name yourself.

Okay?

Now, Rev. Maraj -- Rev. Richard -- this Sunday is probably going to quote from Revelations 2:17. So the deal is: You can't tell him that I read it the Wednesday before, okay? Shhhhhhh! [Congregants laugh] Okay, ziplock, right?

So in Revelations 2:17, we read this: *"He who has ears, let him hear what the Spirit has said to the churches. To him who conquers, conquers, I will give him some hidden manna. And I will give him a white stone."* We're doing the white stone ceremony this Sunday! *"I will give him a white stone and a new name will be written on that stone which no one knows except the one who receives it."*

So I want you -- if you participate in the white stone ceremony this Sunday -- I want you, when you get your white stone, I want you to do two things with it. On one side of your white stone, I want you to define who you're going to be this year: *"A child of God; created in the image and likeness; I'm a spiritual being; I'm whole and complete and lacking in nothing."* I want you to begin by defining yourself. And on the back of that stone, I want you to write down what that allows you to do in the world.

The idea in Revelations is that you will be given hidden manna. You will be given source; you will be fed; you'll be taken care of; you will be provided for if you claim your new name. As spiritual beings, we have to claim a new name for ourselves that is higher and greater than we've ever been before.

That all we can do is what we've always done if we keep operating from the same mindset, from the same name, from the same nature. But when we change our nature -- when we change our mindset, when we change the way we identify ourselves and name ourselves -- then all things become possible.

See, I get really excited about this time of year. And, you know, if you want to create 57 New Year's resolutions, God bless you! [Congregants laugh] You and everybody at Planet Fitness are going to be there for the first two weeks, right? [Congregants laugh] And God bless you, right? Because if you don't change your nature, you're not going to change your life.

But if you start by changing your nature, then now, all things are possible.

So what's the name? What's the nature? How do you want to define yourself this year? You get to decide! For Myrtle Fillmore, it changed her life. When she began to call herself a child of God, it changed her entire healing process.

When we change our nature, there is a door of possibilities that opens that is not open to us until we do. So who do you want to be?

Will you pray with me?

I invite you to open your mind, your heart, your soul to the activity of God. There is but one presence and one power: God the Good. And today, I want you to have so much fun naming yourself. "God, I'm ready for a new name. I'm ready for a higher nature. I am ready to live a greater life. I am ready to know the truth and allow the truth to set me free." That there is so much good available to us. And in the name and through the power of the Living Christ, we claim it all in your name. And so it is. Amen.

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