

DREAM BIG!

Week #2 of a 10-Week Series, "Your Spiritual Quest: The Adventure of Your Life!"

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So, this teacher says to her class, "What do you want to be when you grow up?" And little Johnny says, "I want to be a billionaire going to the most expensive clubs, eating at the finest restaurants, with my gorgeous girlfriend always at my side. And we will have romantic evenings every night, and I will give her a Ferrari worth over a million bucks; and an apartment in Hawaii; and a mansion in Paris; and a jet to fly all through Europe; and her own unlimited American Express card."

And the teacher was shocked and she was really uncomfortable with what Johnny shared, but she didn't want to squash anybody's dreams -- Johnny's or anyone else's. So she just continued with the class and she said, "Suzie, what do you want to be when you grow up?" And Susie said, "I want to be Johnny's girlfriend." [Congregants laugh] All right ...

So, how many people have a goal or a vision for your life? How many people would say you've got a big dream for your life? How many people have more than 10 written-down goals? How many people have more than 25 written-down goals? Wow, I'm impressed!

So on a rainy afternoon in 1939, an inspired 15-year-old boy sat his kitchen table with a yellow legal pad and wrote three words at the center in the top, "*My Life List*." And then he proceeded to write 127 goals that he wanted to achieve. He died in 2013 at the age of 88 and had completed 109 of his 127 goals. Here are some of the ones that he completed:

He climbed Mount Kilimanjaro; he climbed Mount Vesuvius; he climbed Mount Fiji. He visited the Great Wall of China; Vatican City; the Eiffel two-and-a-half half minutes. He did 200 sit-ups. He read the complete works of Shakespeare; Dickens; Hemingway; Twain; and Emerson. He rode on an elephant; an ostrich; a camel. He became a pilot. He flew in a blimp. He dove in a submarine. He learned fencing. He learned jujitsu. He built his own telescope. He wrote a book. He learned to speak French and Spanish and Arabic. He played *Clare de Lune* on the piano. He typed 50 words in a minute. He participated and did a fire walk. And he milked a poisonous snake. [Congregants laugh]

Now you would read this and think – for a 15-year-old boy -- you would think this is unrealistic. This isn't a dream, it's a fantasy! This stuff is impossible, it's impossible. And the reason I give this example is to show the power of a dream; to show the power having a vision and an intention for our lives ... the absolute difference it could make in the things that we achieve; in the things that we create; in the thing that we become.

I saw a poster and it says, "*Think big; dream big; believe big; and the result will be big.*" How many people believe that having a vision and dream is a key and a vital aspect of having a happy and fulfilling life? And so it doesn't surprise us that studies say that people who pursue their dreams and their visions and their intentions, that they are happier and more fulfilled with their lives. People who find something that has meaning and purpose -- that is something that is meant for them -- that working towards it and investing yourself fully in it actually uplifts our sense of well-being and our level of fulfillment and inner peace.

You know we've all heard people say: "*Have a vision! What are your goals? What is your dream?*" And the reason we hear about it is because it's powerful and it absolutely makes a difference.

And so I want to give you an example of how important having a vision is by showing you the impacts of not having a vision.

In the book of Proverbs, Chapter 29, Verse 18, it says, *"Where there is no vision, the people perish. But he that keepeth the law: happy is he."* And so it's saying when you have no vision -- when you have no dream, no direction, no focus, no sense of purpose -- you know what perishes? Our joy perishes. Our passion perishes. Our energy and our motivation and our drive, our creativity; these things perish. If we don't take time to write down a vision -- to come up with a dream or intention for our lives -- we are just not as driven. We're not as focused. And life is not as fun and it is not as fulfilling.

And when it says, *"But he that keepeth the law: happy is he"* it means: he who invests his spirit on creating a vision and intention for their life and pursues it, that they will be happy, because that's what we're meant to do. We are meant to connect with what is within us and bring it forth -- bring life to it to not only bless us, but to bless the people around us.

"Where there is no vision, the people perish." And I would say where there is a vision, there is passion; there is purpose; that there is peace; and there is progress. Where there is vision, you know, we prosper.

And so as much as we believe in the power of having a vision, how many people would say that you probably haven't been as committed and consistent in working on your dream and your vision on a daily basis? How many people would say that? And I find it amazing, but I think a couple of the reasons are because of fear. I think we're afraid to fail. I think we have a fear that we don't have it in us; that we aren't good enough. And I think a part of us might be afraid that we might succeed and may not be able to handle that level of success or greatness. It leads us to just being frozen and doing nothing, or sometimes procrastinating and just putting things off and off and off.

Another reason is: I think it's hard. Sometimes it's hard to get clear on our goals: to weigh the options and our choices and say, *"Okay, I'll do this, but that means I have to give that up."* And sometimes that process of getting clarity isn't easy. You know, it takes time for us. It takes prayer. It takes listening. And sometimes, you know, we just aren't sure of what it is that we want. And even when we find that, it's hard, too, because then we have to bring it to life. We have to invest the time and the energy. And sometimes we would rather take the easy way out. You know, they say always *"Take the road less traveled."* No; we want to take the one well-traveled. We want to take the one a little bit easier. Sometimes we don't want to invest that much work and that much intention and energy and effort in our own dreams.

So sometimes it can be scary for us to dream big, and we would rather just make our dreams smaller to fit what is convenient and in our comfort zone rather than to really stretch ourselves and expand; and put ourselves out there; and increase our level of expectation of ourselves; and call ourselves higher. Sometimes that really scares us, but there is power in taking time to dream big.

So this is the second week of our 10-week series called, *"Your Spiritual Quest, The Adventure of Your Life."* And the truth is: our life is a spiritual quest. Everything in our lives is there for us for the fulfillment of our spiritual growth: to unify our mind with the mind of God and to be one with Spirit; and to be such a channel that we align and allow all the good that is in us and meant to be come forth.

I sometimes think our lives scare us and we just want to run away from it. Last week we talked about the message, *"Bring It On!"* We say we want to live life more fully; well, that means to say, *"Bring it on!"* Welcome all the opportunities, all the challenges, all the blessings in our lives, because they are meant to help us fulfill our spiritual path.

You know, we always say, *"Everything happens for a reason."* Well, that means everything that's in our lives is actually there to help us and support us. But we've got to face it and embrace it to get the fullness out of life and to fulfill our spiritual quest.

Today, the topic is “Dream Big” and how dreaming big is an important part of our spiritual path and process. Today, we'll look at three things to help us dream big.

And the first one is to **OPEN OURSELVES TO THE ABUNDANT POSSIBILITIES IN THE UNIVERSE**. How many people have ever been in a situation where you felt stuck and you weren't making any progress, and you thought, “*Man, does it get any better than this? Will it ever get better?*” Anybody ever have that kind of experience? I mean, sometimes we get to a place where we feel like we just can't seem to break through to another level of happiness or success. We just can't break through that glass ceiling that seems to be there that holds us back. Sometimes we feel like life is just a repetition of the same thing without making progress.

What's that thing they say? SSDD: same stuff, different day? It just seems like that, and it doesn't seem like life is progressing. Because many of us have been taught and conditioned to believe in lack and limitation. We have believed and focused on lack and limitation so much that our mind tends to always go on what we don't have and what we don't want to the point that it's hard to see greater possibilities. It's hard to see a better life and greater happiness.

But the truth is: we live in an abundant world. We live in an abundant universe. There is an abundance of good always available to us. You know, if there is an abundant universe, it means that God is everywhere. And if God is everywhere, that means love is everywhere. Joy is everywhere. Abundance and possibilities are everywhere. Peace is everywhere.

You know, in our Master Mind meditation that we do in between services for setting our intention, the number one thing I start with is reminding ourselves and each other that we live in an abundant universe. There is more air than you can possibly breathe. Everyone breathe in; breathe in more. Suck it in as much as you can! [Congregants laugh] And there will always be more air than you can breathe. There is more love than your heart can hold. There are more ideas than your mind can conceive. There is more joy than you can feel. There are more blessings that you can experience. We live in abundance! We'll never run out of opportunities and ideas and possibilities, because we live in an abundant universe!

I remember many years ago, I used to listen to radio and love music a lot. And I thought, Oh, man, they're going to run out of ideas for songs one day! Or they're run out of ideas for movies or for books or plays or TV shows.”

You know, somebody once said, “*Everything that can be invented has been invented.*” And that's a quote attributed to Charles H. Duell, the commissioner of the U.S. Patent Office, who said it in 1899! [Congregants laugh] See, we've been conditioned to think there isn't enough, but there is! We are not going to run out of anything because we're not going to run out of God! God is the infinite supply, the inexhaustible supply, the invisible substance out of which everything comes. Asking where the substance and the possibilities of God are is like asking a fish where water is! It's in us and all around us. We live and move and have our very being in the abundant goodness of God -- the unlimited possibilities of God!

And the truth is, for us to dream big, we need to recondition our mind first of the abundance we live in and the unlimited possibilities that we have access to. Charles Fillmore said, “*Faith is the perceiving power of the mind linked with the power to shape substance.*”

So faith is this belief we have that there is greater good than what I could see right now; that there are greater things for my life that are available, even if I can't see it. That's faith. But dreams help us shape what that looks like: what that good looks like; what that possibility looks like. That's the power of a

dream: it shapes possibilities. It shapes that invisible substance into an idea for us to bring forth into reality.

Yesterday I was on a YouTube talk show that I've been on several times called *The Funniest Thing*. And the topic came up that, if our minds are not open to possibilities -- if our mind doesn't believe in abundance -- no matter how much abundance there is out there, we'll never be able to see it, or attract it, or experience it, or enjoy it.

And so the first thing for us to dream big: we must open our minds to the truth that we live in an abundant universe. And dreams are the vehicle through which it helps us open up to new possibilities and greater possibilities.

The second thing to help us dream big is to **ENGAGE OUR SPIRITUAL POWER**. Gloria Steinem said, "*Having a dream is a form of planning.*" If that's true, what are you planning for your life? What are you planning for the quality of your relationship? What are you planning for your finances? What are you planning for your level of health? Your level of happiness? What are you planning for your retirement? What are you planning for your growth spiritually?

You know, you can actually probably substitute; instead of saying a dream is a form of planning, you can say a dream is a form of asking. A dream is a form of imagining. A dream is a form of faith. A dream is a form of hope. A dream is a form of desire. A dream is a form of intention. All of the things I just listed are creative powers that God has given us. And I'll add a few more to the creative powers! The power of our thoughts; power of the spoken word; the power of prayer; the power of listening; the power of meditation; the power of giving; and the power of forgiving. All of these are creative powers that are available to us. And when we engage in a dream, we begin to harness them. And they all begin to work for us to support us in fulfilling what it is that we desire.

And one of the things about engaging our spiritual powers is: the first thing we need to do with a dream is to get some clarity. To discern what it is that we want. What is our priority? What is the thing that we are seeking?

You know, how many people have ever been indecisive or wish -washy about something and you didn't know if to do this or that? Anybody ever been uncertain like that? [Congregants laugh] I mean, it is incredible that we are so uncertain and ambiguous! "*So what do you want?*" "*Oh, I don't know.*" "*What do you want to do?*" "*Oh, I don't care.*" It is amazing!

And if we say we live in a responsive universe with the Law of Attraction -- what we put out comes back to us -- uncertainty is the worst thing we could do to ourselves, and the worst message we can give the universe! Clarity is a powerful and important thing for us. Nobody ever calls Amazon and says, "*Hey, send me anything!*" [Congregants laugh]

I mean, if it's a responsive universe, we've got to be careful what is it that we're sending! And that's why it's important for us to take time to get clear. What is it that you want? What is your dream for your life? Ten years from now, what do you want to be doing? What kind of lifestyle do you want to have? You know, what kind of energy? What kind of activities? What level of wealth do you want to have? It's important for us to expand our minds and our awareness and our consciousness to explore these different possibilities.

Three of the things we could do to get a great more clarity is, first, **ask**. If you're a little confused, you know, ask yourself, "*What do I have passion about? What am I interested in? What is the thing that gets me all excited and jazzed up?*" Or we can ask Spirit, "*What is it? What is the ideal life for me? What is the greatest level of abundance that my life could feel a sense of fulfillment for?*" Asking questions is important of ourselves and of Spirit.

The second is **listening**. One of the hardest things for us to do is to just listen. We miss so much by just not listening; just not being still; just not tuning in.

And then the third thing is to **see**. Use the power of your imagination. There's a line in Scripture that's in the Old Testament which says, *"I will give you as much as you can see. I will give you as far as you can see."*

So my question is: What can you see for your life? What is the possibility that you could imagine that isn't currently here? That you could just see in your mind's eye? That's one of the great gifts we've been given -- is the power of our imagination. We can create a picture that isn't here and it can be drawn and attracted and manifested for us.

Jay Leno loved classic cars since he was a kid. And he was working at a garage one summer and he and all the other mechanics were sitting around having lunch. And some wealthy guy had brought in a little fleet of classic cars -- really expensive cars And one of the mechanics said, *"Hey, wouldn't it be fabulous? I could see myself and want to see myself, you know, being that guy's private personal mechanic."* And Leno said, *"I would like to see myself as the rich guy who owns all those classic cars."* [Congregants laugh]

And neither is right or wrong! Because every one of us has to find what's clear for us. You know, everybody doesn't want to be a billionaire. Everybody doesn't want all the things we sometimes get sold by cultures. Specifically for you: what will make you fulfilled? What is a dream that works for you and fills your heart and brings you great joy and meaning? That's the important thing that we need to seek and find.

And we need to take time and do that. And be patient. To listen and know it's a process sometimes. You know, sometimes it takes time for people to find the fullness of their path and the possibilities and their purpose.

My brother, Brian, knew from the age of 15 that he wanted to be a college professor in physical education. And he knew that from 15 years old! And everything that guy did fell into place; you know, getting his degree, getting his master's degree. And then when he had his master's, he was married and had four little kids. And he was working as a track coach. And he had to make a decision at the point: is he going to go for his PhD? Because it's easy; he could have kept putting it off. And, you know, he would have been 40 or 50 and not had his PhD.

And so he borrowed some money, worked as a TA and worked on his PhD. And at the end of it ... I mean, everything once he became a professor just started flowing. He became a dean. The guy's had gotten awards for teaching. But even though he knew it at 15, which was early, it still took a world of work for it to unfold.

For me, I had no clue what I was doing until I was 33! [Congregation laughs] And I always say I was lost for those years. I was depressed. I was stuck. But I really believe that God was preparing me. And the point I want to make is: sometimes when things don't fall into place, it's because God is still preparing us.

At the time after my car accident, I was devastated. Devastated! And I thought my life was over, so I started volunteering. I was a literacy instructor. I volunteered in the prison and halfway houses, giving talks to the kids. I served on different committees of a community arts place; in Goodwill Industries. I mean, I was on different boards. I joined Toastmasters. All of these things, interestingly, helped me do what I do today. Being able to serve and help and support one another; to speak; to work with boards and committees. And it's amazing! I couldn't have gotten it any earlier because I wasn't ready. And sometimes we need to think: If it isn't coming, it's because God's training you right where you are. And

invest yourself! Stop thinking, "This isn't what I'm supposed to do" No, it is! And it's giving you some gifts and preparing you in a way for you to receive whatever wisdom and guidance you need to do what you are here to do. It is a part of the journey. And I think an important thing for us to remember is to just be patient.

My brother and I both love what we do. We just took very different courses and paths to it. It's important to not compare yourself to any others and to invest yourself fully in whatever is going on, because it will lead you to the right place.

The more clarity we get, it will help us focus on our spiritual purpose. Dreams are powerful because they help us have hope for the future, but they give us power in the present. They give us guidance in the present. And the clearer we are, the more we can engage all of our spiritual creative resources.

And the last thing I want to talk about is that to dream big means that it's important to **MOVE IN THE DIRECTION OF YOUR DREAMS**. So this guy was looking for Mount Olympus, and he kept asking everybody, "What's the best way to get to Mount Olympus?" And they said, "I don't know." "What's the best way to get to Mount Olympus?" "I don't know." Then he asked Socrates, "Socrates, what's the best way to get to Mount Olympus?" And Socrates said, "The best way to get to Mount Olympus is to make sure that every step you take is in that direction."

And so let's say your Mount Olympus is your dream or your goal. Is every step you're taking moving you towards that direction? If your Mount Olympus is health, would you say that every step you take is towards that direction? Or sometimes do you take a step away by not eating as well? Or not exercising regularly? Or not getting enough sleep? Sometimes we say that we're looking for our Mount Olympus, but all of our steps aren't leading us in that direction. If you look at the current trajectory of your life, are you moving towards your dream? Or are you moving away from it? Or is it at a standstill and not going anywhere?

Oliver Wendell Holmes said, "*The great thing in this world is not so where you are, but what direction you're moving in.*" And so it's a good question for all of us: What direction are we moving in? Because it doesn't matter where we are or where we're from. It doesn't matter what's happened in the past or what's even going on now. The most important thing is choosing where we go from here. Where do we want to move from where we are right now in our lives?

The great Greek orator, Demosthenus, stuttered. The first time he ever gave a talk in public, he was laughed off the stage. But he was clear and determined, and his vision must be a great speaker, so he chose to move in the direction of that dream. He used to put pebbles in his mouth to help to speak and to help himself articulate and enunciate. He would try and speak over waves that were crashing to help him project. And he became known and was a great speaker.

Napoleon was short and got bullied a lot, but in him, he wanted to be a leader. He wanted to have power and he became an emperor. Beethoven wanted to share and create great music and even though he became deaf -- fully deaf; he could not hear by the age of 40 -- he still continued to create great music ... some say maybe the best music of his life. Charles Dickens was poor and, even though he was what was poor, he wanted to be a great novelist, and he kept writing and writing and writing. And he became the most read novelist in Victorian England.

It doesn't matter where we are. The question is, what direction are you moving? And are you moving to what you say is your Mount Olympus, to what you say is your dream, to what you say is your vision?

Henry David Thoreau said, "*If one advances confidently in the direction of his dreams and endeavors to live the life which he has imagined, he will meet with a success unexpected in common hours.*" And what he is saying is: when you're so clear about what you're meant to do, and you do it with all your heart

and soul, the universal laws will support you. That you will have breakthrough; people will be drawn to you; you will get inspired. All the powers of the universe will begin to support you if you are that committed. If you are that clear. If you are that engaged in whatever it is you feel that you are called to do.

I believe dreaming big is a powerful and important part of our spiritual work. It helps us discover the creativity and the greatness and the beauty and the genius that is in every one of us. And it comes forth, not just to bless us, but it's to bless the world.

Let's do our affirmation for this week -- our "Dream Big!" affirmation. All right, you ready, everybody? Together:

[With congregation:] *"I live in an abundant universe. The possibilities for my life are endless. As a co-creator with God, I use the power of my imagination to expand my goals and desires. I, [Richard Maraj], live my life to the fullest by choosing to think and DREAM BIG."*

God bless you, everyone. [Congregants applaud]

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