

## THE GOD PRINCIPLE

Week #1 of a series on "Unity's Foundational Teachings"

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This year I want to cover Unity's foundational teaching. So even though we're four weeks in, each week I want to cover one of the spiritual ideas or concepts that define Unity.

And today I'm going to start with God. Well, thank you very much. Have a great week. [Congregation laughs] It's tough to talk about God. No matter what I say about God, God is more than that! From the beginning of time, people like me have tried to tell people about God. We've created elaborate systems and concepts for thinking about God. We've had religions that were created to give ways of practicing those systems. And God exists independently of all that. God doesn't change for the system or the religion or the person praying.

But Unity has many aspects, many understandings, many concepts of God. Unity understands that God is good and only good, and that that goodness is expressed as love and joy and peace and all the qualities of God. We believe that God is Spirit; the one and only presence and power at work in the universe and in our our lives. We believe that God is principle. God is not capricious; that God is principle and that we can count on that. That God doesn't bless one person without blessing all people. That we believe that God is infinite Source; that no matter what the need or situation, that we can rely on God as our infinite Source for greater and greater good in our lives. life. We believe that God has given each and every one of us free will, for we are God's offsprings; we are God's children. And maybe the most important thing that you and me believe about God is that God is within us all. No matter who we are, God is within us.

And there's really two ways to know something as a human. One is through thought; one is through experience. We can either think about something or we can experience it, right? So no matter what you thought about this church before you got here, when you came in and you sat down and you experienced it, the experience is different than what you think about it. How many of you have had that experience where you thought you were walking into this situation and the experience was radically different than you were expecting? Good or bad, right? Sometimes it's much better, sometimes it's much worse! But the experience is often very, very different from our thoughts about the experience.

You know, there's a difference between eating a piece of apple pie or talking about it. Look at me; pie's better! But we have a collective belief that says thinking about something creates a higher, better understanding. Higher education: we have this understanding that it's more sophisticated, it's more cultured, it's more developed. And that when we just feel something, somehow that's more primitive; it's less developed, and thus, less trustworthy.

And I want you to see that distinction, because we actually trust more the concepts and our thoughts than we entrust our own experience of life!

The same is true when we think of God. There are two ways to experience God. We can either think about God, which religion has been fighting over since the beginning -- which concepts, which ideas, which is more accurate, which is more real. But then there's the experience of God. And the experience of God is different. I would say it's better.

And when we look at the whole human history, we find that those people who are trying to take control of another group of people, one of the underlying processes that happens is they try to disconnect those people from their experience. And they say something like, "Well, you shouldn't be feeling that way. You should be thinking this way." And we look at cross culture -- when we look at it over and over again.

And you probably maybe even experienced that in your own life with somebody who wanted to be in control of you, who wanted to take over control of your life. There's the process where there's an uncoupling from your experience, your feelings aren't the "right" way to think about it or feel about it. You're supposed to do it this way.

When we look at what happened when the Europeans came into other cultures. And when it came to us, to just their dress. You know, the European dress was very high-brow; you know, the stiff collars, and the layers and layers and layers. And even when they would go into cultures where the temperature was much warmer, they tried to make sure that they knew that their way of dress was inappropriate. And that their way of dress was more "proper." One hundred degrees with five layers of clothes; it doesn't make sense!

And over and over again, we have seen this thing where it's not about what you're experiencing; it's what somebody else is telling you you should be experiencing, or you should be thinking, or you should interpret the information that way. And yet we have our own inner barometer; we know when something feels good and we know when something feels bad. And we can learn to actually trust that experience as our path through life.

And just because in the beginning it feels good ... And when we realize that situations can change and they no longer feel good, we also have to add that to the file. Because we can trust that inner barometer as our path.

See, one of the things that all religions have come together on is this idea of mysticism. Mysticism is about having a direct relationship with God. It's knowing God intimately within you. And it doesn't matter if it's Christian mystics or Jewish mystics or Hindu mystics, Buddhist mystics, there is that experience that is the path.

And in a lot of Christianity, there's also been this thing that you can't trust your own experience and that you have to trust what somebody else has thought. But when we truly are in the path of God -- when we're truly living our spiritual life -- the experience of God becomes more and more important, because that's what our soul hungers for.

Most of us -- while concepts can be helpful -- most of our souls do not hunger for a concept. We hunger for an experience. And the experience changes everything! When we have an experience of God, it changes everything!

And what's, I think, phenomenal about Unity is: our co-founders were both, in many ways, mystics. They were committed to the experience of God more so than the concepts about God.

Reading from Myrtle Fillmore. And this ... You know, I talked about it a couple weeks ago about her healing. And this paragraph that I'm going to read you is when she wrote about her healing process and her relationship with God. She said:

*"I went to all the centers of my body and I spoke words of truth to them, words of strength and power. And I asked their forgiveness for the foolish, ignorant course that I had pursued in the past, when I had condemned them and called them weak or ineffective or diseased. I did not become discouraged at their being slow to wake up, but kept right on, both silently and aloud, declaring words of Truth until the organs responded. And neither did I forget to tell them that they were free, unlimited Spirit. I told them that they were no longer in bondage to their cardinal mind; that they were not corruptible flesh, but they were no longer in bondage to the carnal mind, but they were centers of life and energy and omnipresent."*

Charles Fillmore said it this way:

*"I noticed, however, that all the teachers and writers talked a great deal about omnipresent, omnipresent God, who is Spirit and accessible to everyone. I said to myself, 'In all this babble, I will go to headquarters. And if I am Spirit and this God they talk so much about is Spirit, then somehow we can communicate, or this whole thing is fraud.'"*

And I want you to see this idea of acknowledging everything that they were taught, everything they understood, but they didn't limit it to a concept. They then took a deep dive into a spiritual experience where they could know God intimately as their experience of God. That they could know God as their God.

**And there are some concepts of God that are more helpful than other concepts of God. That not all concepts of God are equal. But when we take a deep dive and we experience God directly for ourselves, everything changes!**

So in this first week where we're talking about God, I want to challenge you to be willing, in some ways, to put all the concepts that you've had about God in a box. And say, "This is everything that I believed, everything I know, everything I've thought, everything I've understood about God." And maybe none of it's wrong or none of it's bad, but I want you to be just beginning this process by putting it in a box and saying, "But I'm not going to be limited by it any longer. I want to take a deep dive into an experience of God."

Now, when we look at all of the religions of the world, as I said, there's mystics from all faiths. So I wanted to pick three. I picked Meister Eckhart, Zohar, and Rumi: a Catholic mystic, a Jewish mystic, and Rumi, a Muslim mystic. And I want to give you their understanding of God. You ready?

Meister Eckhart:

*"The eye through which I see God. is the same eye through which God sees me. My eye and God's eye are one eye: one seeing, one knowing, one love."*

Now, was that a concept? No! He's trying to use words to express his experience of God, right? And so, what he's writing about is a mystical experience where he has been in the presence of God -- where he felt God -- and wanted to write about it.

Zohar said it this way:

*"No thought can grasp him."*

Right? Rumi said it this way:

*"I looked for God and I went to a temple. I didn't find him there. Then I went to a church and I didn't find him there. So I went to a mosque and I didn't find him there. Then finally I looked into my own heart, and there he was."*

This idea that God is closer to us than we've ever been led to believe.

Do you know what the original Jewish word was -- and this is thanks to Barbara; thank you, Barbara ... Do you know what the original Jewish word for God was? Y-H-W-H. And it was not supposed to be spoken.

And then after a while, they started adding vowels to it and it became Y-a-H-W-e-H, and it was pronounced "yaw-way."

And then what we began to do is to use it as a name. But really first and foremost, what I want to ... I'll read it. Let me just read it.

*“There was a moment when Moses had the nerve to ask God what his name is, and God was gracious enough to answer, and the name he gave him is recorded as H-Y-W-H. And over time, it was abbreviated and they added an “a” and an “e,” and it became YaHWeH, presumably because it's easier to pronounce words with vowels.*

*But Bible scholars and rabbis have noticed that the letters represent breathing sounds, or aspirated consonants. When pronounced without intervening vowels, it actually sounds like breathing: YH (inhale); WH (exhale).*

*So a baby's first cry, its first breath, speaks the name of God. A deep sigh calls his name -- or a groan or a gas that is too heavy for mere words -- calls God's name.*

*Even an atheist would speak his name, unaware that just by simply breathing, he is acknowledging the presence of God.*

*Likewise, a person that leaves this earth with their last breath, when God's name is no longer filling their lungs.*

*So when I can't utter anything else, is my cry calling out his name?*

*Being alive means I speak his name constantly. And so, it is heard the loudest when we are the quietest.*

*In sadness, we breathe heavy sighs. In joy, our lungs are filled until they almost burst. In fear, we hold our breath and have to be told to breathe slowly to help us calm down. When we're about to do something hard, we take a deep breath to find our courage.*

*When I think about it, breathing gives is giving him praise. Even the hardest moments!*

*This is so beautiful and fills me with such emotion every time I grasp this thought: God chose to give himself a name that can help us by speaking it every moment that we are alive.*

*All of us, always, everywhere. Waking, sleeping, breathing, we are saying the name of God.”*

So you want to do it? Let's do it.

So what we're going to do is: we're going to practice this. So we're going to breathe in: Y-a-H. W-e-H  
We're going to exhale: W-e-h. Right? So it's inhale: Y-a-H. Exhale: W-e-h.

[Breathes in and out repeatedly]

How many of you could feel that? Could you feel that?

You know, every week I try to give you a homework assignment. I think this is going to be the easiest one ever. For 10 minutes a day, I want you to breathe in and out the name of God. Just breathe in and out the name of God. And I want you to feel what happens when all you're doing is breathing in and out the name of God.

How many of you have heard about mindfulness? Mindfulness training? Mindfulness meditation? Now, what's the basis of mindfulness? The breath, right? It's not thinking about anything. They're not trying to sell you on an idea or a concept. They're just trying to get us to breathe in such a way that our whole system calms down and we have an experience of something.

What I want you to see is that that experience opens the door to an experience of God.

See, I could tell you all my experiences of God, right? I could tell you all my beliefs and concepts of God. And they're all right! I mean they're all right, because they're mine, right? That was a joke. Sorry.  
[Congregants laugh] But I'm not sure that's always helpful. There's a point in our spiritual journey where

more concepts aren't helpful because we need to have a direct experience of the divine. We need to know God.

And so in these 10 minutes a day, you're just going to practice breathing. Breathe in; breathe out Breathe in; breathe out. And with every breath, you're affirming the name of God. And in my experience, it's quite powerful. That when all the focus is on God, it's very hard to worry. Like, if all your focus is on God, it's very hard to be freaked out. When all your focus is on God, it's even hard to think about tomorrow. Because when all your focus is on God, there is only right now and in a world that seems to be getting faster and faster and faster, to give yourself 10 minutes a day to breathe in and out the name of God -- I think it's transformative.

Would you like to do it again? I want you to you just begin. Breathe in with Y-a-H. Exhale with W-e-h. Breathe in ...

[Breathes in and out repeatedly]

And so it is.

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