

## INNER CHANGE

Week #13 of an ongoing series on "Unity's Foundational Teachings"

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Have you ever wanted to change anything about yourself or your life? [Congregants laugh] Nooooo! Do you think that you've worked more on changing the outside or the inside? If you look at your life, have you spent more time working on the outside of your life -- like the way it looks and all the stuff out here? Or do you think you've spent more time working on changing your inner self? Your inner life?

If I had to guess, as a guessing man, I think the majority of people spend more time on changing their outer world than they work on changing their inner self. Because, you know, we're fine, right? It's just the world that's got the problem. I mean, just look at us, we're just like Mary Poppins; we're practically perfect in every way? [Congregants laugh] Right? It's just the world that's a problem; if we could just get the world fixed, then heck; everything would be groovy.

And so my question really is for you tonight: If you thought about two or three things that you want to change in your life -- your outer life, your outer world -- what two or three things would you want to change in your life? And if you have a pen and take a piece of paper, I want you to actually right now -- jot down -- two or three things that you would like to change in your life, in your world. You know, it could be anything. It could be a new job relationship, either getting in of or out of. Maybe it's a lose a few pounds. Maybe you finally want to take that dog to obedience school. [Congregants laugh] Like, what would it be? If you're going to change a few things in your outer life, what two or three things would you change? Does everybody have a couple? Do a couple of things come to mind that you'd want to change in your life?

Now let's go inner. If you were going to change two or three things in your inner life, what would they be? Is there a thought or a habit or a belief or a behavior? Is there a reaction to a situation that maybe you'd want to change? Maybe you're wanting to let go of some anxiety. Or maybe you want to be more positive. Maybe you want to have a better self image. Maybe you don't want to be so cranky in the morning. Like, if you were going to make an inner change, what inner change would you want to make?

Because I've got to tell you, I love supporting people in making changes and making transformation. I think it is so much fun to help people change! Because I think it is one of the most creative things that we do -- is when we look at our life as a canvas and decide: What would I want to change? If I could change anything, what would I love to change in my inner self and in my outer world? If I could change anything, what would I change? And it's so much fun!

Now, there are those people [laughs] who don't want to make any change about anything. Their goal is to die with their life and themselves exactly the way that it has always been. And if you move one little thing in their life, they get cranky. And you know who you are, right? [Congregants laugh] You know if you're one of those people that love change or hate change.

And if you love change, you're like moving your furniture around and you're moving this and that. And if you hate change, it's like, *"Oh, no; we moved that 15 years ago and it's going to stay there until the day I die."* [Congregants laugh] Right? *"New couch? Who needs a new couch? That couch is just as nice as the day I bought it 87 years ago."* [Congregants laugh]

And so I want to talk about this, this relationship that we have with change. And especially ... You know, my talk is entitled, "Inner Change." And especially I want to focus on inner change today, and really talk about how we make those inner changes, and what that looks like.

Because, you know, I've been doing this series this year about Unity's fundamental teachings and Unity's fundamental framework. And frameworks in Unity are concepts that allow us to explain spiritual things that aren't tangible.

You know, one of the things that Jesus tried to do was to describe the kingdom of heaven. And he used metaphors. He had to use words and images to describe something so people could get a sense of what he was talking about. Because what he was talking about was nonlinear. It wasn't physical. So when people say they take the Bible as the literal word or it's literal, you know ... you can't do that with Jesus' teachings!

Jesus' greatest teachings were not literal. When he said, "*The kingdom of heaven is like yeast placed in bread,*" is that literally true? No! It's a metaphor. He's trying to carry in an image so that you understand that this idea of rising is a spiritual process. Right?

And what was so interesting when Jesus used that imagery of a woman placing yeast in bread-- putting yeast in bread would have made bread unholy in Jesus' time. It would have defiled it. You wouldn't have been able to bring it into the temple, because the only bread you could bring into the temple was unleavened bread. It had to be flat. Now we make pizzas out of it, but there was a time when that was sacred, right?

And so the idea when Jesus said the kingdom of heaven was like yeast placed in bread, there had to be a collective sigh of, "*No! That's not true!*" But what he was trying to say was: that there's a holy process. That, as you awaken to God in you, it is a holy process. You rise; you overcome; you're lifted out of the old ways of thinking, the old behaviors, the old attitudes. And it creates a transformation. Because Jesus, over and over again, was teaching transformation. He was teaching the spiritual process of changing our mind and ideas, changing our beliefs, changing our world so that we could open up to a greater experience of life; that we could open up to a greater experience of God.

And the framework that I want to teach from today is the framework of Spirit, soul and body. It's one of my favorites! Because I think in this framework, what it does for us is it gives us a way of looking at a spiritual process that I think is complicated. And I think it simplifies it to the point where we can lay hold of it and understand it in a way that's different.

So when you think of Spirit, soul and body, I want you to be willing to -- like Jesus said -- put it in new wineskins. I don't want you to bring in your old concept of what is Spirit, what is soul, what is body. I want you just to be able to hear these ideas, these concepts, in a new way and see if -- in holding the newness -- another level of spiritual understanding is revealed to you.

How many of you have heard this idea of Spirit, soul, and body before? Like, that's not a radically new concept. What is new is when we're willing to look at it from a new point of view, from a new direction, and say, "*Is there something fresh and new and clean that I can take from this imagery, this framework, and use it so that my life makes more sense? So that my spiritual life makes more sense?*"

So I want to give one more ... I want to give you a prayer that Fillmore prayed. And it's ... I'm not sure it's going to make sense in the beginning, "*Well, then, Richard why are you using it if it doesn't make sense?*" [Congregants laugh] "*Like, even you don't do that!*" Well, occasionally, because I want to launch this prayer into the room. And then I want us to see -- by the time my talk is over -- if this prayer doesn't make more sense. Right? So let me just ... let me give it to you.

*"I am now in the Presence of pure Being, immersed in the Holy Spirit of life, love and wisdom. I acknowledge Thy presence and power, O blessed Spirit. In thy divine wisdom, erase my mortal limitations and from thy pure substance of love bring into my world, according to thy perfect law."*

Let me read it one more time:

*"I am now in the Presence of pure Being, immersed in the Holy Spirit of life, love and wisdom. I acknowledge Thy presence and power, O blessed Spirit. In thy divine wisdom, erase my mortal limitations and from thy pure substance of love bring into my world, according to thy perfect law."*

Okay? Now, I'm going to give you one more. I'm going to give you Fillmore's definition of Spirit, soul and body.

*"The mind of God is Spirit ... Every man is building into his consciousness these three departments of God Mind, and his success in this process is evidenced by harmony in his consciousness of Spirit, soul, and body."*

He goes on and talks about soul:

*"Soul -- man's consciousness -- the underlying idea back of all expressions. In man, the soul is the many accumulated ideas back of his present experience. In its original and true sense, the soul of man is the expressed idea of man in Divine Mind."*

And body:

*"The outer expression of consciousness; the precipitation of the thinking part of man. God created the idea of the body of man as a self-renewing organism, which man reconstructs into his personal body. God creates the body idea, or divine idea, and man, by his thinking, makes it manifest. As God created man in his image and likeness by the power of his word; so man, as God's image and likeness, projects his body by the same power."*



Now, let me try to make sense of that. Do you see the screen? What's the center? **SPIRIT**. So here's this idea that I want us to lay hold of. I believe -- and what Unity teaches -- is that your essence, your core, is spirit, created in the image and likeness of God. So the truth of who you are -- the everlasting

permanence of you -- is as a spiritual being, created in the image and likeness of God. So you are whole and complete and lacking in nothing. Right?

When we say that we are one with God, we are actually saying that our spirit is an expression of Divine Spirit. That we are an expression of the One, and that we often call that Spirit Light or Love or any of the qualities of God. And that that is your essence and that is timeless; that is eternal. That you're always expressing God's Spirit through you. And when we say that we are created in the image and likeness of God, that we are a spiritual being expressing the spirit of God.

Make sense?

Now, the next thing is the **SOUL**. Now this is a different concept than most people understand soul. For most people, they understand soul as synonymous with Spirit. And when we say, "*your spiritual soul,*" they think about Spirit.

In Unity, we understand the soul is the sum total of everything that you believe: your past experiences; your doubts; your fears; your human experiences. That's all what makes up your human consciousness, your soul.

Now, what's interesting about that is: when the light of God -- when the Spirit of God in you -- expresses through your soul, whatever we hold at the soul level or whatever we hold at the level of consciousness -- then is reflected in the world around you.

And that's what allows us to have a soul healing. Because anything that is in our soul that isn't fully, transparently expressing God is going to show up in your life. Make sense? So if you have doubt or fear; or if there's a worry or a past drama; a wound that you haven't healed at the level of your soul, it's going to show up as that Light shines through you ... as God shines through you.

You say, "*Well, I don't want to see it. I don't want to know it.*" And it's like, "*Well, yeah; we kind of have to.*"

So from a Unity framework, our spiritual work -- our soul work, our soul healing work -- is: anytime you heal anything at the level of soul, you express God in a greater and greater and greater way until you get to the point, like Jesus, where people can't tell where God stops and you begin. That we actually want to become so transparent -- so holy -- at the soul level that the infinite Light of God shines forth in all that we do.

You know, there's stories that Jesus walked into communities, into towns, and that people were healed just because he walked into them. That the glory of God shone through him so beautifully, so perfectly, so abundantly, because he had healed his soul so completely that people couldn't see where the man stopped and God began.

So our body -- and if you look at the last circle, the outer circle -- our **BODY** and **OUR WORLD** is an expression of that Light shining through our soul.

So from this framework, anytime you want to really truly change anything in your life -- anything in the outer, anything in your world -- all change happens at what level? The level of the soul, right?

All change happens at the level of soul. Because the Spirit is eternal; It never changes. It's always an expression of God. It's always perfect and whole and complete in every way. So all change happens at the level of the soul. And as we heal at the level of the soul, we express God in greater and greater and greater ways.

So our work in this model is: "*What in me is not perfectly expressing God?*"

Have you ever had a thought that wasn't a perfect expression of God? [Congregants laugh] Have you ever said anything driving on the 101 that wasn't a perfect expression of God? [Congregants laugh] Right? Have you ever treated your next-door neighbor in a way that wasn't a perfect expression of God? And we could probably all say, "Yes; many times."

And so what's so important about this is that, as we understand this model ...

And, you know, I used a quote last week where John the Baptist said, "*He must increase and I must decrease.*" And I want you to see that, from this model, the soul -- or that spiritualized personality that John the Baptist represented -- that part of us must decrease. As cute as your personality is, it may not always be a perfect expression of God. And as we do our soul work -- as we heal the pain and the wounds and the stories and the drama and all the old beliefs of the past -- as we heal at the soul level, we become a more clear ... We express; we become more transparent, and the glory of God expresses through us in greater and greater and greater ways.

And then what happens in our world is that it expresses God in greater and greater and greater ways. That's why Jesus said "*Seek ye first the kingdom and its righteousness.*" And that's why, when your ego says that you're profoundly broken, it's just not true! Because your Spirit can never be broken. You might have an issue in your soul that needs to be healed or loved or transformed, but your core -- your essence -- is pure God.

And so when we hear this idea of what we really do ... See, we're really not here to fix anything. The reason meditation is so powerful -- the reason that prayer works -- is that meditation actually moves the focus off of your story, off of your thoughts, off of your drama and puts the focus on the Spirit. And the more you focus on the true Spirit -- your underlying essence, your underlying core -- as you focus on that, you begin to believe that's truly who you are. You begin to express it in greater and greater and greater ways.

That we're trying to make changes in our life that could just so easily be transformed if we just moved our focus off of the outer and on to our Source, on to God. We're trying to do all this stuff in the world when the only way that we're going to have everlasting peace is when we truly can see that we were created in the image and likeness of God.

*"I am one with God."*

Will you say that with me? [With congregation:] *"I am one with God."*

One more time: [with congregation] *"I am one with God."*

Okay, now let me go back to Charles Fillmore's prayer. Because I think -- and now that I've kind of explained all that -- I think it's going to make more sense. Okay?

*"I am now in the Presence of pure Being ..."*

Now, from the soul level, has he moved the focus off of the outer world and on to his inner presence? Yes!

*"I am now in the Presence of pure Being. I am immersed in the Holy Spirit of life, love and wisdom ..."*

His focus now is clearly on God.

*I acknowledge Thy presence and power, O blessed Spirit. In thy divine wisdom, now erase my mortal limitations ...*

What's he asking for? He's asking for a deep, complete soul healing. He's asking for a transformation of his soul so that he can express God -- that Light, that Love, that Spirit -- in greater and greater ways.

*"And from thy pure substance of love bring into my world, manifest according to thy perfect law."*

I want you to see like in in two sentences -- three sentences -- how absolutely profound this prayer is. Because in this prayer, he encapsulates what I think all soul healing is about: that we transform all the erroneous, crazy, limiting aspects that we have believed about life in ourselves. And we put the focus so clearly on God that we manifest the glory of God that is within us in a way that has literally transformed everything in our life.

I'll read it one more time:

*"I am now in the Presence of pure Being, immersed in the Holy Spirit of life, love and wisdom. I acknowledge Thy presence and power, O blessed Spirit. In thy divine wisdom, now erase my mortal limitations and from thy pure substance of love bring into my world, according to thy perfect law."*

So you ready for your homework? I want you to see, tonight, that one of the most powerful prayers that we can pray is ask God to heal any condition in our soul that is not fully expressing the glory of God that is within us.

That each and every one of us is a perfect, holy, sacred expression of the Divine. And the more that we heal at the soul level, the more that Light shines through in greater and greater and greater ways.

*"Heal me, Spirit. Search me, Spirit. If there's any aspect of my soul that is not expressing your Light, transform me, Spirit."*

And in this way, we become more and more transparent and express more and more God.

Will you pray with me?

I invite you to open your mind your heart your soul to the activity of God. That there is but one Presence and one Power -- one God -- expressing through each and every one of us. And, today, we just clear the path; we just clear the light; we clear the field so the Light of God could shine through us in Its brilliant, loving, holy, sacred way. That we are living expressions of all that God is. In the name and through the power of the living Christ, we give thanks. And so it is. Amen.

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