

OOH LA LA

Inspired by The Rod Stewart Song

Week #3 of a 5-Week "Songs of Life" Series

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So there was this guy having a couple of drinks at a bar when the five o'clock news came on. There was a story of a man jumping off a bridge. And so he continued having a couple of drinks. Next thing you know, it's 7 p.m. and they're running the same news reel. And he turns the guy next to him and he says, "I bet you a \$100 that guy does not jump." And they showed the same thing; of course it happens again, and he pays the guy the \$100.

The bartender notices and said, "Buddy, what is up?" He said, "You were here when you saw the same reel and the guy jumped. Why would you bet \$100 that he wouldn't jump?"

And the guy said, "Well, I guess I didn't think he was stupid enough to do it again." [Congregants laugh]

Okay. Okay. So that didn't work this morning, either. And ... [Congregants laugh]

How many people have ever made the same mistake over and over again? How many people have ever said or thought this phrase to yourself, "*Why is this happening to me again?*" Anybody ever have that?

You know, sometimes we, in life, repeat certain things. We have the same arguments. Sometimes we deal with the same problems. You know, we have the same family dysfunction. We have the same financial issues. We have the same feelings of unworthiness or the same feelings that people are taking advantage of us. You know, it is amazing how we sometimes repeat unhappy, unhealthy and unfulfilling experiences.

Do you know that 95% of what we think today we thought yesterday? Is it surprising that we kind of repeat some of these things? And even in our brains, when we have certain, you know ... The brain forms, like, a mental template of certain behaviors – it could be positive or negative -- and when we keep tapping into them, they get easier and easier to just keep repeating. We see life the same way; we make the same choices; we get the same outcomes over and over again. You know, it's like we're putting out this mental energy, you know. And by the Law of Attraction, we keep attracting more and more of it.

And so how many people would say that you have at least one negative pattern in your life that you would like to change or at least stop repeating? Anybody have that? And how many people would like to replace it with something good and far better than what you're experiencing?

You know the Apostle Paul says some powerful words. And he said, "*Do not conform to the patterns of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.*" It's one of our most favorite Unity Scriptures, because we love that Scripture in Unity. Because we believe in the power of our mind. We believe in the power of our thoughts and our thinking; our attitudes and our mindsets. And what Paul is saying here is: you don't have to keep repeating the same, dissatisfying, dysfunctional stuff; that we can transform ourselves. We can change our minds. We can change our lives to create something better, and better, and better.

So we are in the third week of our annual "Songs of Life" series. You know, when I was a kid, I was really blessed. I was the eighth of 10 children. And so I had seven siblings; I got to listen to all their music! So I was born in the Caribbean, so I grew up on Calypso and Reggae, but my parents loved classical music; they loved Indian sitar music. My one brother loved Engelbert Humper, Humperdinck, [Congregants laughs] I can't even say it properly! [Laughs] You know, Perry Como, Andy Williams. My other brothers

liked The Beatles and Pink Floyd and Boz Skaggs. My sister used to make us listen to the Lawrence Welk Show there; that kind of music. [Congregants laugh] you know, the Motown ... I mean on and on and on! I could give you the Donna Summer; I mean everybody!

And the thing is, I always loved and was inspired by music. No musical talent whatsoever, but I loved music and feel inspired by it. So I've been doing this for years, because songs move us in an amazing way. So I love extracting a spiritual principle from famous songs. I just think it's a cool, fun thing to do.

And so Week #1 was Taylor Swift's "Shake It Off." Week #2 was The Beatles' "Golden Slumbers," "Carry That Weight" and "The End."

And today we're going to go to 1973; the group was actually called Faces that put it out; Rod Stewart was the lead singer. But interestingly, he didn't like the song, Recorded it, didn't like it, and refused to put it on the album. And Ron Wood actually is the one who put this song out first for the Faces. And the group split up the next year after this album, and Ron Wood went to the Rolling Stones, and Rod Stewart had obviously kicked off a phenomenal solo career. He didn't record this song until 25 years later; until 1998.

And I have to say, I always loved this song. The beat is so uplifting. I love the chorus. But I had no idea what the song was about. Ever hear a song, really like it, and have no idea what it's about? [Congregants murmur] Well, here's what it's about. It's this grandfather who's giving relationship advice to his grandson. And the grandfather is bitter and jaded about relationships. And he's telling the son about the perils of being in a relationship. How you are going to get hurt. How you are going to get used. And you need to be leery of entering relationships. And so that's what this song is about!

And he's even saying, "*I wish I knew that earlier,*" you know. And I love that that part of the chorus:

***I wish that I knew what I know now
When I was younger***

I bet you we all have something in our lives. We wish we knew when we were younger. There are all kinds of things! Like, I wish I learned how to say "No" earlier. I wish I knew about the value and the importance of meditation and prayer sooner. You know, I wish I knew that asking for help is not a sign of weakness. I wish I knew that everyone is hurting in some way and dealing with their own personal inner battle, and so it's important to be to be kind and compassionate to others and gentle on ourselves. I wish I knew that things happened for a reason. I wish I knew when your heart breaks, and you feel like it's the end of the world that, in time, your heart will heal and you will love again. I wish I knew to not spend so much time regretting the past and, instead, accepting it and just keep on moving and keep on living.

You know, In the song, the grandfather realizes the grandson is not going to take his advice; that he's going to work on finding out and creating his own. And the grandfather thinks, "*Oh, that's going to be the harder course.*" But the grandson knows, "*No, that's the best way for me to live -- is to learn, find my own way and live my own best life.*"

And so today we're going to look at the life lessons and the spiritual message in Rod Stewart's song, "Ooh La La."

So the first thing to learn, find our way, and live our best life is to **DEVELOP A GROWTH MINDSET**. Now, obviously, a growth mindset simply is a mind that is willing to learn; a mind that is willing to grow; and a mind that is willing to see things in a positive perspective. How many people here have ever messed up in a big way? Anybody ever messed up in a really, really big way? And how many people would say, even

in the way that you messed up, even though it took a long time, you eventually learned and gained something good that helped you from that mess up?

You know, I always say: If we were to write our own autobiography, every one of us would have a chapter entitled, *"It seemed like a good idea at the time."* [Congregants laugh] Don't we all have something? It seemed like a good idea at the time! And then we look back and think, *"What was I thinking? How could I do that?"*

So one of the biggest lessons I ever learned in my life was in high school. And when I was in grade 10, I was in "Man and Society" class. And we had to do a presentation that was going to be worth 50% of our grade on a social service agency. And I took the Addiction Research Foundation.

The teacher, Mr. Brown, posted the list of when we were going to present, and he said, *"This is a random order, but you've got to be ready. You've got to be ready whenever you're called."* I counted, I was on day four. So I came in on day three, unprepared with the Addiction Research Foundation pamphlet at the bottom of my gym bag, And then I was saying, *"Well, I'll do it that night and the next morning. I'll do my presentation,"* as the schedule said.

Unfortunately, the kid that was ahead of me was not there. And Mr. Brown said, *"Richard, you're up."* I said, *"Sir, sir, sir; this is long. I don't want to run long. and maybe I should do it tomorrow."* He said, *"Richard, get up there."*

So I fished out the pamphlet from the bottom of my gym bag, and I got up there unprepared and just shaken. And so I'm reading the pamphlet: the Addiction Research Foundation is located at 44 John Street North in Hamilton, Ontario.

And within maybe a minute, he said, *"Sit down."* [Congregants laugh] Kids were laughing at me. It was humiliating. It was absolutely horrible. And then it got worse when he said, *"If any of you are as unprepared as Richard Maraj, you will be getting a D."* I ran home crying, upset. I mean, it was embarrassing. Couldn't even look at Mr. Brown for weeks. I felt so horrible.

It was a huge life lesson: to be prepared. Do my work. Do not cut things short like that, particularly when it comes to a presentation. And since that day, I always am prepared. Always! You might think my stuff stinks, but you'll at least say, *"I think he was prepared."* [Congregants laugh]

You know, messing up in life is just a part of the deal. It's a part of the deal! Two words that you hear a lot in the Bible are sin and repentance. To sin and repent. Sin means to miss the mark. And sometimes we miss the mark in life. Sometimes we're not as loving or as kind or patient as we'd like to be. And the word repent means to rethink. So we will miss the mark. We will mess up big. Things won't always go that well, but we can repent, rethink. We can choose to respond. We can choose to change our attitude or our mindset and allow ourselves to improve from that situation that did not go well.

And whether it is in giving a presentation, or whether it is in your job or career or relationship or your finances, you know, we have two ways that we can respond. And that is with a fixed mindset or a growth mindset.

You know, a fixed mindset is rooted in a limited, unhealthy, unrealistic belief that we should get it right every time, and that failure or things not going well means that something is wrong. That it is bad. That it is horrible. And we have the tendency, with that mindset, to feel really discouraged and think, *"That's it. It's over. It ain't ever going to get better."* You know, this mindset is a mindset that believes that you either get it right or you never will. That you have it or you don't. That you can't change or improve, because that's just the way life is. And you either succeed or you mess up and you quit. And you realize that things will never, never improve.

The granddad in this song had a fixed mindset. He thought because he got hurt, because he felt used that all relationships are bad. And he was trying to warn his grandson about something that was in his limited mindset. You know, sometimes that mindset can be really rigid and inflexible, you know, and have a negative outlook on all situations in life.

Now, a growth mindset, basically says we can change and improve and learn and get better at anything! Whether it is our talent or intelligence or our abilities or skill, we can always improve and always get better. In fact, this mindset is a mindset that likes to be challenged; that thinks it's fun to try new things and look at things in a different way. It's a mindset that says, *"I can! That this is possible. Why not try this? What if we tried that?"* It is a mindset that is motivated to discover and learn and grow and see things. You know, a mindset that's willing to adapt and adjust and pivot if necessary. And a mindset that absolutely believes that setbacks and adversity are a necessary part of growth, success and transformation.

So I ask you: What kind of mindset do you utilize when you go through times when things are not going as well as you'd like? And in what area do you have in your life currently that you know it would behoove you to tighten up and develop and strengthen the level of growth mindset that you handle that situation with?

In relationships, a fixed mindset says, *"My partner should know that I love them without me having to say it. I shouldn't have to work hard, you know, to be in a good relationship."* Where the growth mindset would say, *"I believe my partner and I can love each other in a better way if I'm willing to communicate and listen and us work together."* It is a huge difference.

I really, really believe that a growth mindset is absolutely the key to success. It is the key to overcoming. It is the key to changing and improving and transforming our lives. It is a growth mindset that allows us to have positive responses and to be persistent in achieving the things that we want.

Two famous, fabulous growth mindsets to me: Thomas Edison. You know, they said, "You failed 10,000 times!" He said, *"No; I successfully discovered 10,000 ways that don't work."* What a powerful growth mindset! To not be deterred; to say, *"No; this will improve. I will find the answer."*

The next one, Michael Jordan, got cut from his high school basketball team. Here's what he said. He said, *"I have missed over 9,000 shots in my career. I have lost 300 games. I have been entrusted with the final winning shot and missed it 26 times. I have failed again and again, and that is why I succeed."*

And that is the truth about life. We will fail; we will mess up. But the mindset is, *"I will learn."* The mindset says, *"I will get better."* The mindset is, *"I can improve. I can change."*

In the book of Luke, Chapter 2, Verse 52, it says, *"Jesus increased his wisdom and stature and his favor with God and man."* And it is saying Jesus grew. Jesus grew into the fullness of the Christ. And if we are willing to keep learning and growing, that we can express more of that Christ light in ourselves.

Life is about learning. Nobody gets it right and perfect all the time. That is just not realistic, and not the way that life is meant to be. Life is for learning. And when we stop learning, we stop living. We stop growing.

You know, somebody once said that, in life you're either expanding or contracting. And we all need to think about our lives. At this moment, are we expanding or contracting? Are we learning or are we stuck and stagnant?

You know, to me, one of the best things about utilizing the power of our growth mindset is by what's going on in our lives right now. Whatever it is that is before us, we need to ask, *"What is this trying to*

show me or teach me? How is this trying to help me change? How is this trying to help me see things differently? What in me do I need to heal? What in me do I need to let go?"

You know, it's important for us to not gloss over what's going on in our present. Sometimes we say, "Oh, I want spiritual advancement. I want spiritual growth." You know where that starts? Right where we're living right now. Whatever it is up for us, that is the key to our spiritual growth and spiritual advancement. To look deep inside ourselves; to look deep into our mind, deep into our hearts. And to see what needs to be changed or healed to help us expand and grow.

The things we wish we knew: one of them is that the renewing of your mind will change your life. And that one most important thing for success is to develop a growth mindset.

Now the second thing to help us learn, find our way and live our best life is to **ASK GOD**. How many people have ever had a situation in your life where you had no idea what to do? You just have no idea! You know, in the Book of James, Chapter 1, it says, "If any of you is lacking in wisdom, ask God." *"If any of you is lacking in wisdom, ask God, who gives generously, and it will be given to you."*

A growth mindset is powerful and important. Asking God goes deeper. Because to ask God is to the Wisdom and Intelligence that created the universe and every cell of our being. It is to open ourselves to the Source that makes everything possible. To the Love out of which whose image and likeness we have been created, and that Love that is always seeking to express more of itself and more good into all areas of our lives.

If we are lacking in any area, ask God. And what that's saying is bring God into every area of your life. If you're struggling in your career or your relationship, bring God into it. And if you're struggling with your health or other issues, or what your purpose is in life, bring God into it.

I had lunch with a friend the other day. And he said, "Open your hand." I said, "Okay." And he puts something in my hand. He covered it up and he said, "Shake it," and it feels like two dice. And he said, "If you've got anything going on in your life, just shake those dice and roll it, and it all give you the right answer." So I shook it and I rolled the dice. And both dice on all six sides said, "God." [Congregants laugh]

And so, you know, if you feel lost and confused, God is the answer. If you aren't sure exactly what to do, God is the answer. If you're feeling sadness, God is the answer. To seek God, to ask God, to trust God, to listen to God, to turn to God in all things. Leave no area of our lives without a desire to pull God in as our partner, as our Source, as our guidance.

I was praying with my prayer partner this week, and we were talking about seeking God's guidance. And she said the way she does it recently is: she prays about something in her own way. And then she says, "God, what say you?" [Congregants laugh] "I have a difficult decision I need to make. God, what say you? You know, I'm not sure what to do about my health. God, what say you?" But even if she says, "God, I want it this way or that way; I'd like to vision this and that," still at the end of it. she says, "God, what say you?" What say you?" Because it is a version of asking God.

When you're lacking wisdom, ask God. If you've got a legal situation, seek God. "God, what say you" Ask!

And another powerful one is from Paramahansa Yogananda. He said, One of the most powerful prayers you could pray is: "God, reveal thyself. Reveal thyself. Reveal thyself. Reveal thyself to me; reveal thyself through me." Because what it is saying is: it is a complete surrender and saying, "God, I'm going to open my heart all the way. I'm opening my life all the way to allow you to guide me and express yourself through me."

Growth mindset. Ask God. And the third for learning and finding your own way -- living your best life -- is to **STRETCH YOUR FAITH**,

Hey, have you seen or ever been to one of these new stretch labs? Have you been to one of these things? Stretching has always been an important thing, but it's kind of a new wave. And one of the reasons is: stretching is vital, because the lengthening of your muscles actually makes them healthier. You know, the blood supply is greater. You're less likely to be injured. If you are injured, you're more likely to heal and recover.

But the most important thing about stretching is: it helps you with your range of motion. Because to have a range of motion -- and to do more with ease -- improves the quality of our lives. But when we are tight and cramped, it limits our movement. It limits our ability. And we're in a bit of pain, so we're not quite as happy. Stretching is huge. Stretching is valuable. Stretching: that principle of going beyond -- you know, stretching beyond -- so that we can relax and feel better in our bodies is vital.

And I would say the principle of stretching is also an important part of our spiritual practice and our lives. Jesus said to the man, "*Stretch out your hand.*" Jesus, in all ways, was really saying stretch your compassion; stretch your faith; stretch your willingness to love and forgive. You know, stretch your belief; stretch yourself spiritually, that it expands us and improves the quality of our lives.

And I would say to stretch ourselves and try new things: take a risk, take a chance, be daring to go further and dream further than you ever thought you could do. Don't hide. Don't limit. Don't get tight. You know, be willing to risk and expand and stretch.

Two months after my disaster and embarrassing experience in "Man and Society" class, they were having student elections for the fall. And so I was ending Grade 10, and it was open for the Grade 11 rep. And I thought, "*I'm going to run.*" And I was with the sports guys; that was my thing in high school. So it was a stretch to step out into politics stuff. And I decided to run, and my sister came up with my posters and my slogan, which was, "*Vote for Richard Maraj, because he's a nice guy.*" [Congregants laugh] We kept it simple!

But here was the deal. It culminated in giving a talk to the entire school. So, here I was, two months after being humiliated in front of 30 people with one teacher saying to myself, "*Hey, why don't I speak to 500 students and a number of teachers?*" So we prepped it.

And, you know, all the kids do the same thing: "*Good morning, staff, students and teachers. My name is such and such, and I'm running for such and such.*" So we thought we'd try it a little different. So I remember being up on the stage, the lights are on me, and my heart's racing. I mean, my heart's racing! I'd never done any public speaking beyond that thing in "Man and Society." I was terrified. I'm shaking. I'm sweating like crazy.

So I get up there and I start shaking my head. And I said, "*I'm Richard Maraj, and I'm not just another pretty face.*" [Congregants laugh] I said, "*I will be your next Grade 11 rep. And I want you to know that I know that we are all in the same boat, and I want to be the captain of that ship to guide it in uncharted waters. And I will navigate us through the rough seas and get us into calm and smooth sailing so that we have a safe and enjoyable and fulfilling journey.*" I said, "*I want you to share with me anything that is of concern for you, because any that bothers a Grade 11 student bothers me.*" I said, "*Please let me be your captain. And if you want me to be, vote Richard Maraj, because he's a nice guy.*" [Congregants laugh and applaud]

And so, shockingly, I got a standing ovation. But here's the kicker! In the front row, just off to the side, standing, clapping, and smiling, was Mr. Brown. [Congregants laugh] And so I have to say, that made me

feel a level of confidence, a level of joy. Expanded my experience from being one of the athletes to also being in student government. It was a great, great experience.

You know, stretching and expanding ourselves and being daring ... I mean, they may not have laughed at all that, *"I'm just a pretty face"* and all that stuff. I mean, sometimes people won't go with you, but it's still worth the risk. Because to expand ourselves and try something new is always worth it. We will learn so much; we will grow and expand in great ways

One of the things I love was Peter. You know Peter: you remember when he stepped out of the boat? And for a moment or two, he was standing on the water, you know. And then he started to sink and he got back in. And even though his faith wavered, Jesus really loved him. You know why? Because he was willing to try. He was willing to step out of the comfort of the boat that he was in. He was willing to expand his faith to the point that Jesus said, *"You are the rock upon which I will build my church."*

He's not saying about being perfect; he's saying, *"Give it a chance! Are you willing to try?"* And not just sit there and play it safe. Are you willing to be daring? You know, are you willing to put it out there a little bit?

So my question is: Where in your life are you being called to stretch and try something new? Try something different? Do something that scares you a little bit? Do something that will expand you and have you reach beyond what you think you can do or have done?

You know, there are all kinds of things we wish we knew. I wish I knew this. I wish I had this chance. And I always say, that's not the best thing. You know why? Because if we didn't have it in our lives then, we weren't meant to have it. It's because the reason we didn't know it back then is because we weren't ready for us to have it back then. Life is about learning and growing, you know? And we're not always ready.

Ever say this, because I've said it myself? *"I wish I knew Unity way earlier than this."* Haven't you said that? But it's like, I wasn't ready! You know, *"I wish I had met you."* It's like, Yeah, but I wasn't ready. All the things in our lives -- we always say, *"I wish I knew."* Da da da. It's because we weren't ready. There is divine timing. It is divine order. And we need to be ready. You know, we all heard that, when the student is ready, the teacher will appear. That's the truth. That's the truth! And so we're always preparing ourselves. But if something isn't in our lives, it's because it is not meant to be there at that time.

Growth mindset: Always see that you can learn, you can change, or something new that you can do. You can rethink, retry, adjust yourself, and things will grow and improve and get better.

Secondly: Ask God. *"What say ye, God?"* You know, *"Reveall thyself through me."* Ask God. Bring God into every area of your life.

And finally: Stretch your faith. Take a chance. Reach beyond your grasp. Do things that make you feel uncomfortable, because it will expand and grow you.

"Ooh La La" is a French expression. And it's usually an expression of surprise and excitement. It's French, so it's often related to sexual stuff, but we will ignore that. [Congregants laugh] *"Ooh la la; huh huh!"* [Congregants laugh] You know what I'm saying? And so...

But "Ooh la la" is an expression of excitement and an expression of surprise. Like, look at the great life you get to live – ooh la la! Look at the incredible power of your mind that you get to use as a resource – ooh la la! Look at all the things you could learn and change and grow and become – ooh la la! No matter what happens in our lives, we can learn. We can find our own way and we can live our best life. And that to me is the message in the song, "Ooh La La." God bless you all! [Congregants applaud]

"Ooh La La" Song Lyrics

Poor old grand-dad

I laughed at all his words

I thought he was a bitter man

He spoke of women's ways

They'll trap you, then they use you

And before you even know

For love is blind and you're far too kind

Don't ever let it show

I wish that I knew what I know now

When I was younger

I wish that I knew what I know now

When I was stronger

The can-can, such a pretty show

Steals your heart away

But backstage back on earth again

The dressing rooms are gray

They come on strong and it ain't too long

For they make you feel a man

But love is blind and you soon will find

You're just a boy again

I wish that I knew what I know now

When I was younger

I wish that I knew what I know now

When I was stronger

When you want her lips, you get her cheek

Makes you wonder where you are

If you want some more then she's fast asleep

Leaves you twinkling with the stars

Poor young grandson

There's nothing I can say

You'll have to learn, just like me

And that's the hardest way

I wish that I knew what I know now

When I was younger

I wish that I knew what I know now

When I was stronger

I wish that I knew what I know now

When I was younger

I wish that I knew what I know now

When I was stronger

Ooh la la, Ooh la la
Yeah yeah
Ooh la la, Ooh la la

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